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The American University in Cairo

School of Global Affairs and Public Policy

"The UN-Touchables
Humans Rights Discourses and the Challenges of
Emancipatory Politics in Lebanese Women's
Movements"

Maya El Helou

Under the supervision of Dr. Martina Rieker

September 2014

Dedication

*To Martina Rieker, for the politics of hope and imagination you grew in me,
in a world that lost its ability to imagine and hope.*

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Prologue

At this historical moment, one rarely dares to claim that one does not want justice, or equality. Governments claim to provide justice through the law, international human rights institutions such as the United Nations claim to peruse a more just world through its human rights apparatus. Military interventions that caused war and colonized countries in the name of giving justice obviously claimed to want to be just as well. Seemingly, everybody wants justice. Whereas justice seems to be everywhere and nowhere. The question of justice is one that has been asked for millennia and it is not one that I claim to answer in this thesis.While questioning justice is a valid endeavor, answering such a profound question is impossible. Throwing a woman or man in jail for stealing bread because he/she cannot feed their family given that the economic system is built in a way that produces rich and poor is, to some people, perceived as justice. And this is the simplest example where the concept of justice fails - to begin with. Therefore in my quest I intend to interrogate how justice is perceived rather than what justice is. This thesis hence explores contemporary perceptions of justice through an analysis of discourses surrounding the rule of law in a feminist collective *Nasawiya* and the women rights non-governmental organization (NGO) *Kafa* in Lebanon. I carefully examine the tensions between activists and academics concerning the country's domestic violence law. This thesis seeks to intervene in the production of knowledge(s) concerning law from both academic and Lebanese activist standpoints. Some activists in Beirut argue that academics come from a position of privilege, especially those among them who are very prominent in the US academia. Activists usually argue that those academics are not in direct contact with violence, unlike the women that are living with everyday violence .

Consequently, so the argument, their life does not depend on the law as that of the women that navigate violence in their lives. This leaves a very narrow space for questioning the rule of law and silences the kinds of questions and concern raised by academics.

As a member of these activist circles, upon pursuing my MA exposure to academic debates on the limits of law and the UN system, opened up new perspectives and questions regarding the often taken for granted questions concerning justice. Marx argues that the world is concealed from us, where all we see from the process of production is the end product, which by itself blinds us to the power hierarchies of exploitation that take place in order for us to get this end product. Therefore in this thesis I use the same analogy in order to argue that the way in which the law of domestic violence surfaced as a fetish for the feminist movement in Beirut is based on similar politics of concealment. Change and strategies of resistance do not happen in a vacuum but in a certain historical moment and in a specific geographical location where most of the world of politics is concealed from us. It is out of this deep awareness that I decided to pursue this thesis in which I argue that an emancipatory feminist project that defines its aspirations within the boundaries of, and in compatibility with, hegemonic reform agendas cannot lead to transformative possibilities.

Following fifteen years of civil war in Lebanon, followed by fifteen years of oppressive rule by the Syrian regime, the attraction to international human rights discourse is understandable, with little attention given to the complexities of notions of justice articulated by UN rights agendas. Therefore in this thesis I aim to push the debate beyond the hegemonic perception of justice and equality that is provided (not to say

imposed) by international human rights institutions. I question what is at stake when a feminist collective with radical left politics such as *Nasawiya* becomes absorbed in neoliberal modes of thinking based on the international human rights language at the expense of formulating its own agendas. I ask what are the costs if we kept engaging in the perpetual legitimization of state and rigidified state control through the lobbying for laws, how is emancipation possible within pre-tailored perceptions and strategies of achieving justice as an end product that disregards the fact that the world is in constant motion and freezes justice in time. Therefore this thesis proposes to carefully examine the imbrications of Lebanese women's movements with the juridical regulatory complex derived from the global gender governance infrastructure and its effects on the articulation of a vision for other futures.

> "I have nothing more to do here," the little prince said to the king.
> "So I shall set out on my way again.
> Do not go," said the king, who was very proud of having a subject.
> "Do not go. I will make you a Minister!
> Minister of what? Said the little prince
> Minster of— of Justice! Said the king
> But there is nobody here to judge! Said the little prince
> Hum! Hum! said the king. "I have good reasons to believe that somewhere on my planet there is an old rat. I hear him at night. You can judge this old rat. From time to time you will condemn him to death. Thus his life will depend on your justice". – The Little Prince

At this very moment, the lives of women in Lebanon are dependent on state justice that has proved again and again to curb every law to fit its agenda. It is obviously the perfect timing for questioning the efficiency of the law in providing justice with the recent passing of Lebanon's domestic violence law. The committee studying the law managed to manipulate and distort the law to the extent that it institutionalized marital rape. In the domestic violence law that was passed, sex with the husband became a right

rather than an act of consent and desire. This premise goes against the feminist narrative that the NGOs and collectives are working on and lobbying for. I chose to highlight this specific point because even though the religious rules of marriage are discussed differently between Muslims, Christians, and Druze, it is the first time that sex is mentioned as a right in a civil code. Thus martial rape is now legal in a written law that was passed, the outcome of six years of mobilization by feminist collectives. The law that passed is mostly against everything they believe in. After six years of activism, 'the domestic violence law' serves the state, giving it a tool for more control rather than it being an emancipatory tool.

As I wrote this thesis I wondered how long would the state take to show its real face. It didn't take long. Therefore this thesis is an experiment to think of strategies beyond the law. The law as a strategy might be something we cannot escape, but I make this statement with a lot of discomfort. Why are we then working within such an oppressive tool that dictates an unequivocal way of achieving justice with no other alternatives? Certainly victories through the law were sometimes achieved, if these victories never existed, the state and the rule of law, I contend, would not have continued to exist as we know them now. These small victories that we achieve through the rule of law are what drags us into staying within its vicious cycle. Oppression does not sustain itself on big losses of human rights or imagined liberation. It sustains itself on small victories. These anesthetic anecdotes of liberation are the food outside the cage of the rat wheel in which we are stuck. The scarier, or rather hopeful question, would be what will happen once we realize that.

Chapter One

The UN-touchables:[1] The UN and feminism in Lebanon

"Is this all we can hope for" Wendy Brown

Introduction

This thesis is a process of questioning and understanding. It is also an invitation to begin by tackling social problems in a different way: by asking questions rather than looking at the world as if it is static, where one solution can be the answer. Through this research I try to unpack the complexity of activism under neoliberalism. Moreover I try to problematize the forces of gender governance that via its international institutions constantly attempt to absorb feminist collectives by limiting possibilities to rupture hegemonic narratives of the UN, global legal imaginations that at this moment in history articulate, arbitrate and define justice, assigning ongoing problems of justice to issues of local implementation. This discourse of the UN disregards the social and economic situations that produce the injustices UN legal infrastructures presume to fight against. Thus this thesis is an attempt to push beyond these discourses and unpack the social and economical situations that produce injustices.

I problematize the category of law in Lebanon through an analysis of the mobilization of the feminist collective *Nasawiya* and the women rights non-governmental organization (NGO) *Kafa.* Based on my fieldwork I begin by examining how activists in both groups perceive the efficiency of the Lebanese domestic violence law in providing

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[1] I do realize that the word untouchable can be understood as the untouchable cast in south east Asia, especially in India and Nepal, whom are perceived as the subalterns in the cast hierarchy of Hindu practices. But in this research the UN-touchables is a play on words that tries to render the united nation as an institution that have become above critic thus became untouchable, with a lot of stakes in its influence on the political sphere of feminisms.

justice and equality to women in Lebanon. I trace how the domestic violence law has turned into a commodity desired and fetishized by these activist groups. Finally, I unpack the imagination of the activists I interviewed and analyze them in terms of imagining emancipation as a process of becoming rather than a static goal. Through out this thesis I try to break out of the dogmatism of problem solving solutions and push my analysis towards imagining a movement that pushes beyond problem solving discourses, in other words, a movement that asks questions instead of finding solutions.

The thesis seeks to gain a fuller understanding of three sets of questions: First, what is the influence of hegemonic human rights language and how rooted is it in the feminist collective Nasawiya? What is the relationship of both Nasawiya and Kafa to the state? Second, what women's rights issues are made visible in Lebanon now and what are the relationships of these acts of making visible to international women's rights agendas as prioritized in international gender governance and the UN system? Third, how are these issues discussed locally, among whom, and who is included in the debate and who is excluded and with what implications and for what effects? These questions are driven by ongoing debates in Lebanon regarding the women's movement. Given the role of UN discourses/programs on gender governance, it is noteworthy that there is hardly any critical literature analyzing its impact on the Arab region in particular. The vast majority of scholarly work has focused singularly on questions of effectivity and implementation.

Literature Review

Human rights activism has been the predominant framework over the past twenty years through which social movements articulate their aspirations. Human rights are defined as the ability to protect one self against injustice and degradation of dignity. (Brown, 2004.) It is in these present values where rights get reproduced and where hypothetically speaking, everybody has rights, while the present political events is a radical indicator that human rights are not for everyone. Humanity and by humanity I mean the level of being treated as a human being with rights, is sadly being defined by a person's class, gender, sexual orientation, color, ethnicity, background, education, career, passports, geographical location and so on. For many activists rights and human rights have become the framework for formulating resistance to patriarchy, colonialism, oppression, and the struggle for human equality, justice, freedom and women rights. The latter terms surfaces consistently throughout my fieldwork interviewing people about violence against women and laws. In asking my questions I attempted to interrogate the value of these terms compared to their value as essential concepts to human life, and hence make visible how these terms are being emptied from their content. For example the term 'justice' is a very popular one, but what justice is and how do people imagine justice matters. Words without content and meaning, without regards to how they circulate and are used, after all are just letters organized. On the other hand, in trying to understand the "complex power of apprehending the present" an increasing body of critical work has emerged suggesting that human rights have become the "guise in which globalization of capital drapes itself" (Brown 2004, p.451).

Agier (2010) argues that humanitarian aid and agencies function as the left hand of the empire operating as the emergency solution in crisis, while at the same time

feeding into creating and reproducing crisis itself. The definition of a human being in human rights discourse based on the declaration of human rights, gets abstracted within a universalist language that defines the state as essential in the protection of it's subjects, where the human being becomes defined only as that which distinguishes itself from the non humans (Assad, 2007, p.5). Building on this critical body of work, this thesis is premised on an understanding of human rights discourses as another form of neoliberal globalization that strategically deploys the rights' language for its particular objectives (Amar 2009). Cornwall, Geidon & Wilson, (2008) join many other recent critical feminist analyses suggesting ways in which the notion of empowerment functions as a tool for depoliticizing feminist social movements and turning them into NGOs that work in offices and provide services instead of working towards social change. In their respective influential work Fraser (2010) and Menon (2004) explore the justice complex variously showing how justice can never be impartial within the hierarchies of power. For an emancipatory feminist project the imperative to define its aspirations within the boundaries of, and in compatibility with, hegemonic reform agendas cannot lead to transformative possibilities. This thesis proposes to carefully examine the imbrications of Lebanese women's movements with the juridical regulatory complex derived from the global gender governance infrastructure and its effects on the articulation of a vision for other futures. Moreover this thesis tries to understand how neoliberal agenda of global governance works as a tool of absorption of feminist collectives in order to absorb them into the current system that works with governments and laws instead of questioning them.

The Articulation of Human Rights within the Feminist Collective

This thesis intends to understand the entanglement of human rights language with feminism through my discussions with activists in *Nasawiya* and *Kafa*. The most challenging part of writing this thesis was the fact that the same views of feminism which I analyze and critique were shaped by constant debates and political practices that I encountered and gained by being part of the *Nasawiya feminist collective.* At the same time, this critique comes from a deep sense of realization that we need to be critical and analytical in order to be able to grow and flourish be it on the personal or collective level. I provide the reader with a genealogy of *Nasawiya* as a participant and observer of some of the events that took place since its foundation in 2008.

Introducing Nasawiya and Kafa

What had attracted me to *Nasawiya* when it first began was its feminist, non-women rights, discourse, a discourse that furthermore did not view and categorize Lebanese people according to sects. Up until today there are people in *Nasawiya* that I met of whom I know nothing about their religion and sect because it simply did not matter. To the reader that might be something insignificant, yet in the context of Lebanon these locations within the social domain get mapped (or asked) within minutes of any conversation. *Nasawiya* in that sense was special. State feminists and other women's rights groups very quickly perceived *Nasawiya* as a radical 'non-conventional' group, one that was received with critical scrutiny, but also a group with which alliances around particular issues were possible.

Nasawiya's enagement with Lebanese women's politics are best exemplified by

their critical engagement with the Arab Women's Forum platform, organized by state feminists and headed by the Lebanese president's wife *Wafaa Soulieman,* to engage the 'Arab Spring' that was held in one of Beirut's five star hotels. A group of feminists in *Nasawiya* came together at the end of January 2012 in order to write a critique of the event, among others pointing out core problems in state feminist practices such as holding an event at a five star hotel with a USD 300 attendance fee. Writing in Arabic, the critique focused in particular on the exclusion of the domestic violence and rape law from its agenda:

> It is obvious that the Forum's agenda does not intend to transgress
> the red line of the discourses of the state and religious figures,
> this purposefully silences many other voices that want the domestic
> violence law to be passed as it is…
>
> When the Forum speaks of women and economy as one of the
> issues it is tackling, it is inviting powerful businesswomen to talk
> about the economy, marginalizing working class and
> unemployed women. Furthermore, in our vision any political
> democratic change in the Arab world should work in parallel
> on issues of social justice. Replacing one political figure
> with another while preserving the socio-economic status quo,
> is a discourse that tries to maintain rather than change the
> situation…
>
> Since the Women's Forum addresses women in the Arab Spring,
> it cannot ignore the importance of the need to end military rule
> and royal reigns … As for asking for women's quotas in the
> government, we don't see that the problem limited to
> women not being represented in the government, but
> in the core of the sectarian political system that does not
> allow anyone a real just representation in the government.

The collective ended the statement by asking:

> What type of Arab Spring exactly is it that will flourish
> in a march for women that takes place between
> the Four Seasons Hotel and downtown Beirut.
> (Excerpts are my own translation)

The critique was issued as a press release and was signed as "feminist activists" and represents the political agenda and activisms that define the core political values of *Nasawiya,* that is, the struggle against not only sexism but also classism, racism, sectarianism, military and royal reigns, the mode of governance by the Lebanese state and state feminism. These political principles resonate with my own understanding of feminism as one that does not normalize the state and views injustice as a complex and imbricated phenomena. While conflicts regarding leadership, political agendas are part of all collective work, with the 'Take Back the Parliament Initiative' (to be elaborated on later) Nasawiya underwent numerous changes, leading to the departure of many of its members, myself included.

Before this rupture, in its first six years key projects of *Nasawiya* included 'Salwa for Fighting Sexual Harassment,' 'The Feminist Tools for Change,' 'Take Back the Tech,' 'The Anti Racism Movement (ARM)' 'Meem' (a queer women support group) and 'Sawt Al Niswa' (a feminist zine). *Salwa* aimed towards fighting sexual harassment through spreading awareness in the streets, host events and feature television advertisements that center on a cartoon character with a super power bag called *Salwa.* For example, one of *Salwa*'s television spots featured *Salwa* getting harassed by her boss at work where her boss tries to kiss her after telling her she got a raise. She fumes with anger and slaps him with her bag and leaves work. Another was about *Salwa* being cat called names in the streets where she stands up for harassment and defends herself. The third was about *Salwa* being harassed by a family member inside her house as a child, when her mother finds out, beats the harasser, kicks him out and give *Salwa* the famous

bag that works as a self-defense kit. *Salwa*'s target audience was basically children and teenagers.

The 'Feminist Tools for Change' initiative targeted women in Beirut and in towns and villages throughout Lebanon to engage in a conversation with women about their rights. The initiative ARM focused on racism against migrant domestic workers in Lebanon, and assisted in setting up migrant workers support networks. It provides migrant domestic worker's with a space to establish their own communities that mobilize against various modes of oppression and racism. ARM established a community center for migrant domestic workers, and organizes a a domestic worker parade on May 1 every year and mobilizes against the *Kafala* law. *Meem* is a queer women group initiative that provides a space for queer and transgendered/transsexual people to form support groups, discuss politics, and produce written narratives of their own history. Meem also hosts an online zine *Bekhsoos* and published *Bareed Mista'jil*, a book that tackles the lives, challenges and success stories of queer and trans people in Lebanon. Finally, 'Take Back the Tech' provides summer campus for young women interested in becoming involved in technology.

*S*ince its foundation in 2008, *Nasawiya* has mobilized for protests against sexual harassment, domestic violence, rape and marital rape. It hosts a protest march every March 8 on international women's day. In preparation two days prior to the march members of the collective engage women on the streets in Beirut, and other towns and villages across Lebanon around diverse topics, such as "do you think women have their rights in Lebanon?" or "what type of change do you think should happen in Lebanon?" It has engaged debates and mobilized against the sectarian system in Lebanon, the

Palestinian cause and BDS. *Nasawiya,* as I experienced it, was a highly political space with radical anti-sectarian politics. The latter is a significant aspect of *Nasawiya,* within the highly charged sectarian political space of Lebanon it is rare to find such spaces. *Nasawiya* organized a protest on the 8th of March on international women's day.

The other subject of study is *Kafa.* I was introduced to *Kafa* through my membership in *Nasawiya* in 2008. My interaction with *Kafa* was mediated through my work with *Nasawiya,* in particular as a volunteer lobbying for the passing of the anti-domestic violence law *Kafa* was working on. Hence, I introduce *Kafa* through their website mission statement (2014)

> Established in 2005 by a group of multi-disciplinary professionals and human rights activists, KAFA (enough) Violence & Exploitation is a Lebanese non-profit, non-political, non-confessional civil society organization committed to the achievement of gender-equality and non-discrimination, and the advancement of the human rights of women and children. KAFA's mission is to work towards eradicating all forms of gender-based violence and exploitation of women and children through advocating for legal reform and change of policies and practices, influencing public opinion, and empowering women and children. Our focus areas are those of 1) Violence against Women 2) Child Sexual Abuse 3) Exploitation and Trafficking in Women 4) Socio-Legal Counseling

Kafa always played the role of lobbying in the anti-domestic violence law, while *Nasawiya* mobilized for protests in collaboration with *Kafa, Nasawiya* took a more militant approach to asking for the passing of the law through protests, articles, and social media campaigns that did not compromise on the passing of the law as drafted by Kafa. Even though I present Nasawiya as a radical left collective, it is important to note that *Nasawiya* does not exist outside the human rights language. Despite the progressive post-colonial rhetoric of this collective, the language and categories deployed remain embedded in global governance discourses especially those of human rights. This contradiction elaborates on how many scholars among them Harvey ( ) and Savater ( )

continue to argue that neoliberalism is not only a mode of thinking but also have become a way of life. It infiltrates every detail of the everyday and no matter how resistant people are to it, neoliberalism manages to accommodate difference and transform it. This raises the question as to what is at stake if this language of human rights that lobbies for juridical laws to protect women *is* the predominant way in which the Lebanese feminist collective debates and imagines emancipation. Building on Nivedita Menon's (2004) argument that human rights vocabulary seeks to establish tools in which universalist modes of intervention into state practices takes place, this thesis will argue that understanding the global political terrain and its impact on the region is imperative in order to go beyond dominant discourses in which the region, states and communities are variably racialized and culturized as other with ineffective or non-compliant adherence to neoliberalism's norms and forms.

Imagining the Lebanese State

> A country that is already overrun with guns and drugs
> and anxiety, grating with xenophobia and sexism
> and riddled with chronic electricity and water
> cuts, groaning infrastructure, a criminal and
> parasitic political class, and a seemingly endless
> tolerance for stasis (Makdashi, 2013).

In order to form a better understanding of the context in which these two groups function, there is a need to draw on the history of Lebanon itself, and unravel the various political histories that produce the present. Here I find it crucial to reflect on how challenging it was to capture one historical account that narrates the most recent history of Lebanon, given that various political groups, after the civil war produced their own sectarian narratives about the civil war. It is important to note that understanding

Lebanon - as it is produced - as an exception is a simplistic analysis that isolates Lebanon as place outside of the history of the rest of the world. Lebanon is produced as an exception to the world due to its historical civil war, and its eighteen sects that are in perpetual conflict among each other. Thus there's a need to complicate this view about Lebanon to begin with.

Within the modern imagination of states, and within the perpetual aspiration of forming nation states, nations are built on the premises that there is one national identity that should unite the citizens that live within certain nation states borders in order to form a nation. This production of nationalism is sensitive and allergic to difference. This act manifests itself in various geographical locations in different ways. In the Lebanese case, the failure to form one national identity within the imagination of modern Lebanon, given the diverse sects resulted in a civil war that lasted for fifteen years. The civil war of course was not only a result of the formation of nation state, but as well due to various class and race issues. Nation states cannot exist by themselves; they exist in relation to an opposite. Lebanon for example is not Lebanon by itself; it is Lebanon because it is not Syria, or Egypt. It is as well a product of colonialism.

Lebanon has been historically a jigsaw of religious-ethnic communities, which share a long history of continuous conflict. Qubain argues that the Christians during the French mandate allied with colonial powers for protection against the Arabisation of the region (Qubain, 1961, p.29). Postcolonial Lebanon as a state was built on fractions. It is worthy here to mention that since the Christians allied with the French mandate for protection, the Christians were given more privileges in terms of development;, infrastructure and education. This widened the gap between the various Christian and

Muslim communities. Since the founding of the Lebanese state, the unequal divide of wealth and development which privileged Christians over Muslims has been one of the reasons for the underlying tensions between both religions (Salibi, 1988 p.35).

The latter, along with the aspiration of forming a united nation state, is one of the very basic reasons that lead to the civil war in 1975. Qubain (1969) argues that the Christians in Lebanon insisted that they are the majority irrespective of historical demographics, thus wanting more representation in the government. Christian communities in Lebanon such as the Maronites consider themselves to be the founders of the Lebanese state and have clashed in the past with the Druze community and, during the 1975-76 civil war, with most of the Muslim communities (Kilot, 1987).

The Lebanese war was marked with military intervention from three sides: the Israeli, the Syrian, and the Palestinian. Resulting from historical clashes between different sects – where the Christians wanted to be identified with the west, and most of the Muslim sects wanted to adopt a pan Arab identity – the Lebanese identity was founded on the ground of difference and opposing binaries between the Arab and western identity.

This identity conflict serves today as a tool of the Lebanese government to sustain itself. This constant production of sects as others to each other is one of the reasons that legitimize the existence of the Lebanese government as the protector of the national unity. Moreover, the sectarian civil war fear propagated by state is one that works in favor of the Lebanese government members that are the same political class that governed through the civil war and up until today. The legitimization of their existence

and their reign is derived from a constant fear that if this political class falls another civil war might take place.

This constant production of difference as a tool manifests itself in the trials that took place to stop the civil war. The first step toward stopping the war was the Taif Agreement. It institutionalized the cementing of differences that are in perpetual competition. Consequently after the Taif Agreement, power was divided between the various sects and representation in the government was given to all sects by law. That said, Mikdashi (2013) describes Lebanon now as "a country that is already overrun with guns and drugs and anxiety, grating with xenophobia and sexism and riddled with chronic electricity and water cuts, groaning infrastructure, a criminal and parasitic political class, and a seemingly endless tolerance for stasis" (Ibid). This description captures the core of the conflictual everyday that defines the contemporary everyday in Lebanon. Mikdashi also notes that "The word "sectarianism" fails to capture the nature of these disputes over Lebanon's future and its geopolitical alliances" (Mikdashi, June 5, 2012). Rather, it's a system that produces identities as primarily sectarian especially once they get politicized. Lebanon is currently mostly run by the militia leaders that participated in the 1975-1990 civil war (Mikdashi, June 5, 2012), who still practice their governmental jobs with impunity.

On the other hand it is often argued that history itself is problematic, especially Lebanese history since it is up until today that there is no one history book that is taught in all schools, or a historical narrative that is told by people similarly. For example in 1984, an article was published by Massarat (2012) about including the civil war in history books in the school curriculum where he argues that documenting history builds the

memory of the Lebanese and helps in orienting their behavior, moreover he objected to the fact that the civil war is not being taught in school. Years later, a similar article was published by Daccache in 2012 (Memory at work, 2012) titled "So that the history gets forgotten before it's written". Where he objected to the fact that history books that are being taught in school stop at the World War II. During these years, many articles were written in newspapers that objected to the marginalization of the civil war from the Lebanese history curriculums and taken as a sign of erasing memory. If books as argued by Dawson and Roper (2000) are vehicles of memory where certain knowledge gets transferred to a group of people, then a certain type of knowledge transfer up until today has failed to capture the Lebanese history. Memory is political in the sense that memories are produced out of experiences – experiences of interactions with others – and the process of remembering is intrinsically linked to the formation of identity and selfhood. (Roy, 2009).

Therefore, remembering as a personal experience feeds into the building of identities of the future as sectarian ones that get only one side of the story. There was a need for such a memory studies intervention when one is giving a historical background about Lebanon since as mentioned there are no facts in the Lebanese history, there are merely documented events, personal narratives of stories, personal and political opinions. All of the above functions as a tunnel in which one can have access to knowledge about its history, that should never go unquestioned or taken for granted.

Within this activism around the conflictual nature of Lebanese history, an initiative that aimed at archiving the Lebanese history was founded: the Memory At Work project. What is significant about the memory at work project is that it does not

assume that there is one narrative of history. And this is visible in its deployment of archiving this history via various newspaper articles that were published during the civil war. Thus documenting the daily political happenings during the war from various stand points. Also, gets visible in the politics of naming the project – the name memory at work does not assume memory as static facts that can be argued from one point of view. Whether intended or not, the term Memory at Work does not assume memory as a single narrative, but a more complex one that is at work and in flux, thus takes into consideration perception, political stand points and personal experiences. The highlight of such an initiative is important as a rupture in the way national memory is produced since it avoids concealing certain information in order to form one narrative about the history of the Lebanese civil war. After all the failure to produce one historical book that archives the civil war might not be a problematic aspect, but hold the possibility of rethinking the civil war as multi layered happenings and open possibilities of rethinking civil war in order to not stagnate memories about it.

Lebanon at the current moment is unstable economically, politically and socially. Between December 2013 and May 2014, 6 women were killed in domestic violence disputes. For the past year, municipalities have been hanging banners that forbid any "strangers," read Syrian refugee, from moving after 6 pm at night in order to "protect" the locals from what they define as robbery and rape. The latter is not only problematic but is constraining freedom of mobility and an extreme xenophobic act of racism that carries by itself an enormous amount of violence. The constant production of othering on behalf of nationalism takes place on a daily basis, manifested in not only the othering of

sects, but non-Lebanese citizens. Today, protests of labor unions are taking place almost every week and so are explosions.

On the other hand, for two years now and by the heightening of the conflict and civil war in Syria, Tripoli a city in the north of Lebanon on the borders with Syria has been in conflict too. The mild efforts to tackle this conflict get outdated where every other person in another area, except for a couple of leftist activists lost interest in Tripoli. Blasts and explosions have been taking place for the past year in Beirut, Baalkbak, Dahiye, Hermel, Saida and Tripoli covering almost seventy percent of Lebanon's territories as unsafe areas that are prone to explosions anytime.

This decline in governance made Lebanon as we know it today a place run by not only the government but as well by non governmental organization that provide services to people where the government failed. This yet reiterates the neoliberal nature of Lebanon today, where the state has literally pulled out of the social, yet simultaneously engaging in the social by surveillance, control and regulation. The Lebanese state in that sense does not provide twenty four seven access to electricity to the public, neither water, nor any other social service, but at the same time it's surveillance of anything that in it's perception is outlaw such as people's sexuality or any political act that it does not agree with is highly punishable.

Conflict and Alliance

Through my engagement with *Nasawiya*, I have observed that while the self - identified feminist collective conceives itself as highly political, women rights NGOs mostly consider themselves to be non-political service providers. This non-political self-

identification emerged after the civil war. Jad (2004, p. 7) argues that "The formation of women's NGOs with particular social aims marks a very different form and structures for Arab women's activism from those that predominated in earlier periods" In the Lebanese case, this different form of structure can be traced through the shift from militancy of women during the Lebanese civil war to the starting of the process of the NGO-ization of the women movement in Lebanon. On the other hand, a political understanding that the term non-political can be explained in various way, one of them hints that the NGO that works on women rights is not affiliated in any way with the political parties that rule Lebanon, thus hinting as well that it is not of a sectarian nature, in order to be inclusive to everyone. The latter does not claim that sectarian cannot exist without a political party.

The political boundaries between both feminists and NGOs at times are very tangible, and at other times are very vague. Even though feminists sometimes draw the boundary by trying to dismantle the state as a patriarchal, sectarian entity thus refuse to engage with it on some levels, the NGOs lobby against and with the state. But at the same time the feminists in their alliances with NGOs such as the alliance of *Nasawiya* and *Kafa*, both engage with state at some level through lobbying for the law against domestic violence. Moreover, politics are mostly either a point of conflict or a point of alliance. Even though this history of conflict and alliance is still constantly being produced, and according one of my interlocutors: Razan, a feminist activist and scholar, *Nasawiya* and since its founding, played a huge role in shifting the discourse around women rights among women rights NGOs towards a more radical feminist agenda.

Here there's a need to elucidate on the term radical agenda. Context needs to be taken into consideration in such statements. *Nasawiya* as it's name indicates is self

evident, since it reflects the political stand that *Nasawiya* took, which is a feminist political stand. The term *Nasawiya* now does only refer to the feminist collective, but as well is used (was used before but not as frequently) as a translation to the term feminist. Nasawiya was radical in that sense since it declared out and about in the public – in a society that already perceived feminism as a negative act – itself as a feminist collective. Moreover, *Nasawiya* for example in its ideological political stands took over not only the case of women rights but as well publicly declared its support for the queer cause and sex work. In comparison to the other NGOs that existed by the time *Nasawiya* was founded, this political stand can be perceived as one that is radical.

The relationship that takes place among these various groups of feminist collective and NGOs is complex. Yes sometimes they are in a political conflict, but also other time they collaborate. Therefore here lies the complexity of what I try to entangle through out this thesis: the power hierarchies, difference of political approaches and the communication between women rights groups and the feminists. Not to mention how women rights group have their own divide among themselves as well.

At the same time both *Nasawiya* and *Kafa* contributed over the past few years to an intensified debate around the women's question in Lebanon, they share in common the language of human rights to discuss issues concerning women's rights/ emancipation, and both seemingly tether debates on freedom and equality to laws and regulations. One of the multiple purposes of this thesis is to examine the women's question in Lebanon over the past five years and try to question more fully how hegemonic human rights language has transformed the various segments of the Lebanese women's movements into reform movements working towards finding pre-determined solutions for the crisis of women's

rights instead of working towards deconstructing dominant gender scripts of social change and their implications on emancipation. Moreover I try to question the production of the law as a fetish and an object of desire and understand how it is produced as such and what factors intervene in this production.

The Cedar Revolution: The Unfolding of New Possibilities.

Following the 2005 Cedar revolution,[2] and the lifting of civil society restrictions (prior to 2005, for instance the right to protest was banned). In this research I give *Nasawiya* as an example of how collectives that tackle the freedom story and justice post the cedar revolution. *Nasawiya* is the product of the socio-economic and political context of the history of Lebanon, of which the Cedar movement is part. For instance, the fact that Rafic El-Hariri came as a businessman after the Civil War (1990s) to do all this radical reconstruction of Lebanese urban architecture and Lebanese economy, and give the image of "modern" Lebanon, allowed the proliferation of businesses that are willing to compromise rigid "morals" for profit (bars, women NGOs etc..) and NGOs that speak the language of rights (to give the image of modernity)..So it became possible for women collectives such as *Nasawiya* to exist. The little sense of freedom does not only elaborate on the possibility of such collective to emerge, but as well hints towards the need of such collective to emerge. Also, in 2005 the fact that the Syrian army left Lebanon and people became less paranoid about *moukhabarat* (the Syrian intelligence) (doesn't mean the

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[2] After the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik El Hariri on February 14, 2005, and subsequent protests against the Syrian regime's interference and "colonial" practices in Lebanon, resulted in the resignation of the pro-Syrian regime and the departure of the Syrian troops from Lebanon in April 2005.

moukhabart stopped existing, but people stopped being paranoid about it), and became inspired about values of freedom, bravery and sacrifice due to the cedars revolution, things became more visible, and there was less fear and more spaces that emerged within that context and that historical moment.

In parallel to the process of NGOization of women movements in the Arab world, Lebanon have witnessed a growth in NGOs work and an increase of NGO visibility, grassroots feminist social movements and women NGOs. All of them since have played a major role in intensifying the debates about women rights and gender equality. These movements vary between grassroots feminist collectives based on progressive post colonial, anti imperialist politics and institutionalized women rights NGOs that work on lobbying for laws and providing services for women.

By saying services for women, a lot of questions arise, part of these question is one that does not only interrogate what is a women but as well, and for the sake of specificity what a Lebanese woman is. Here I find it essential to define or rather un-define what a Lebanese woman is, or who the Lebanese women are. Through-out my interviews with Lebanese women and women who either have the Lebanese passport or who have been raised in Lebanon despite of their nationality, I have noticed that the category "Lebanese wom(e)n" barely exist. The different subjectvities of those wom(e)n and the way they ontologically came to being challenges every hegemonic presumption of any project that attempt to categorize these women as one. A Lebanese woman raised in a Christian area, from a certain class and background may not have anything in common with a Muslim women from another area. This difference might not be good or bad, one is not better than the other as similarity is not assumed to produce equality.

Therefore Lebanese women are not "one woman" as the song of the UN women says. The Lebanese females are not one woman, if one of us cry that might not mean all of us will. It is very challenging and beyond unfair to label, say for example, a woman from Ras Beirut (still within the urban) to a woman from Karem El Zaytoun (another area in urban Beirut). Ideologies, religion, sect, background, education, class, modes of gender expression, views on things change from one place to another. Therefore it is a reductionist approach to categorize all Lebanese women as women. They can be Lebanese women but from somewhere, or from certain sect, or certain activist background, or class, and had experienced some type of war in a different way at some point in their lives. The multiplicity of the identities of Lebanese women needs to be looked at in a feminist postcolonial lens in order to be understood. Lebanese women cannot fit in one category as nationals of Lebanon, the plurality of their subjectivities transcends national affiliation to religion, sect, class, race, ethnicity, color, geographical location and sectarian affiliations which are at play in defining a Lebanese woman's subject position, thus challenging the hegemonic presumptions about women as a homogeneous category. That said, it is important here to note that these differences played a role in the access of different women from different sections in Lebanon to participation in the civil war as fighters or supporters of fighters.

For example during the beginning of the civil war women of the phalangists party joined the party as fighters that had their own weapons and units. Moreover women from the Amal, and Hezeb Alla parties engaged with the fighters by being supporters and helped the men in the traditional way (Shehadeh, 1999). On the other hand, women from the left parties, were fighters as well, especially the militant women from the communist

movement in the south and south Beirut. Moreover, and even though in a lot of books Muslim women in specific were mostly documented as nurses and supporters of Hezeb Alla and Amal movement, photos from the civil war contradicts these assumptions by showing veiled women in specific with guns. This leads us again on these constant contradictory narratives about the civil war in Lebanon and what gets visible via knowledge production and what gets concealed.

Even though women were part of the freedom fighters party, which entails a lot of loss of life; it is noticeable that the way in which they are remembered in historical sites is stuck within the traditional heteronormative role of mother, sister, and nurse during the war, even when they were militant. Moreover, the way the Lebanese state functions, widens these differences among the women and institutionalizes these differences via the personal status law that treats each group of women differently according to their religion and sect. Therefore, a Christian woman is not only a Christian woman, she is either maronite, catholic, orthodox, Armenian orthodox, evangelical and many other categories. This applies to the Muslim women as well, she's either Sunni or Shiaa and the latter have categories of following certain rules under Sunni laws or Shiaa laws. Then there are the Drouz, which are a minority around the world that exist in Lebanon, Palestine and Syria only and have their own internal laws and beliefs. Even color sometimes plays a big role in shaping womanhood.

On the other hand and on a global scale neoliberalism has intensified; the neoliberal system reproduces people under capitalism (Katz, 2005, p.624). The neoliberal system produces people that intentionally or not perceive and deal with each other as commodities. Therefore any type of subjectivity the neoliberal system produces

is one that is oriented by capital and its relationship of power, which led to the expansion of human rights discourse to influence movements. Amador Fernández-Savater argues that neoliberalism exists in every detail of life where we experience life as a business. The author adds that neoliberalism happens not only as an act of coercion but also through daily life practices where people conceive themselves as a business and others competitors. Moreover regardless of what we think of neoliberalism, whether we are critical about it or not, it sustains itself since our opinion against it is abstract while it is desired and we experience life through its feelings. Neoliberalism produces others as obstacles instead of companions. (Savater, 2014). Therefore with this rise of neoliberalism and in parallel with the rise of the global gender governance agenda that deploys itself through the language of rights, women and feminist movements are constantly being absorbed by the neoliberal system through various modes of NGOization, access to funding that make out of them competitors to get funding money. Moreover under constant trials of being tamed in order to absorb their militancy and resilience against the various system of oppressions that suppress them.

The human rights discourse has expanded in scale becoming the only way in which movements of resistance discuss emancipation. And women especially from the global south became "one" entity. The recently acquired freedoms in Lebanese civil society and its intersection with international human rights discourses produced new sets of challenges. In order to be able to get at some of these issues, this thesis will revisit and engage the complexity of the women's question in the Lebanese state from 2008 to 2013. This time frame is significant for an exploration of the articulations, strategies, and tactics deployed by different movements under the concept of 'resistance.'

I am particularly interested in exploring local formulations and visions of what constitutes resistance. Resistance does not always mean resistance against the system per se. It can mean as well resistance among various sectarian groups against each other, or among civil society groups – that on some level – tend to reproduce the same dynamics of Lebanese political parties among themselves. Here, a contextualization of the language of rights and its keywords as deployed and engaged in Lebanon becomes essential. For instance, the vocabulary of human rights has gained much popularity in discussing resistance. Yet, nothing exists without context. I understand context as the invisible particle constituted from multiple particles that come together to form a concept or a term that reflects a meaning, which eventually becomes consolidated as the grammar and discourse of activism. This thesis will trace rights based discourses in the contemporary Lebanese women's movements in order to further our understanding of the possibilities and limits that this imagination brings to gender-focused activism. I seek to explore how rights-based language, and the projects and agendas that it structures, domesticates the world of Lebanese feminist politics within gender governance frameworks. Furthermore, I will trace the debates and processes within specific movements to get a fuller understanding of ways in which distinct Lebanese women's movements ended up limiting their visions to "crisis prevention" in the post Cedar revolution years. I am particularly interested in understanding how has this particular form of activism emerged as a singular agenda uniting the "non-political" NGO service providers and groups explicitly defining themselves as working outside the dominant system with explicit visions for rupturing "the system".

This thesis thus will attempt to push beyond the global circulation of terms and

grammars, and immerse rights discourse as understood and deployed by different

movements in Lebanon through a geographical-historical lens.

Chapter two

Who are the Un-touchables?

Introduction

Zizek (2010) argues that a true left is one that admits there's a crisis and does not fear crisis, but confronts it with no illusions. Illusions are embodied in the belief that the rule of law will solve the social problems women are subjected to, and present the solution as reform. Over an informal dinner with a friend who works with the UN, I asked what do you think of the UN and the answer was "They ruin things so they can fix them." The statement reminded me of Harvey's "Striking with one hand, healing with the other." A big chunk of my analysis in this thesis tries to reflect this point, how the UN and through it's gender governance managed to tame movements, but most importantly how inequalities are vital for the UN's existence and practices of control. Here I would like to revisit my title, the UN-touchables. The UN-touchables symbolizes the dogmatism surrounding the United Nations and its policies and behavior, especially in the global south. But it is worthy to note that more and more recently when a conversation is started with a co-activist about the UN, there's a sense of dystopia towards the UN that was not there a year ago. The hegemonic power of the UN with the rise of crisis, wars and revolutions, especially over the last three years, whether in Syria, Egypt, Tunisia, Lebanon, Yemen or around most of the world, have opened the eyes on the UN's problematic existence. The UN-touchables might still be untouchables given the human face of imperialism it still manages to wear, for the UN as perceived in this thesis is an empire by itself that has a humanitarian face that gives the illusion that it exists to help any type of minorities, while on the other hand, what it really does mostly, is come

with an agenda to implement that serves to sustain the global powers as they are. At the same time, something happened beyond only the personal experiences of people with the UN, this thing I argue is critical knowledge production about it.

In *Recovering Subversion*, Menon (2004) questions the unending desire for laws in contemporary women's activism. Based on a genealogy of law and subjectivity in the historical construction of the modern state, she argues that the language of rights and citizenship has become problematic and in the historical present no longer works in favor of emancipation. In a similar vein, Aradau (2008) explores ways in which the production of women as victims leads to the depoliticization of the women's question and turns it into a crisis that needs to be solved through protection by human rights agencies and states. Victims, so Aradau, require protection, which in turn produces the demand for security. Securitization discourses, she argues constitute a tool for ordering and regulating the social through more policing and rules. Therefore when women NGOs ask for laws to "protect" women from family violence, women are portrayed as already vulnerable and in need of protection which feeds into reproducing the same oppressive narrative that takes agency away from women and expands notions of control for the sake of protection.

Brown (2004, p.462) asks "whether the reduction of suffering promised by human rights is the 'most we can hope for'' and argues that activists need to take into consideration how human rights politics try to organize space in order to monopolize it for other projects of power. Moreover, she questions the categorization of the ills of our times, and questions if human rights discourse is enough to address these. Critique of concepts and categories hence is essential for understanding our current moment in

history. Even though, as Brown (2005) cautions, critique might not entail providing solutions, critical theory is the thread that can get us towards a fuller understanding of the constitution of the crisis itself. But then again, is that all that we can hope for? Given that feminist critique of the empire has been vast field, this thesis aims towards highlighting the importance of critique in pushing forward modes of thinking around these discursive narratives, including how the shift in these modes of thinking have an epistemological and mobilization value by itself. Likewise, Cornwall, Gideon and Wilson (2008) trace the neoliberal influence on notions of emancipation, and the extensive gendering of the heteronormative discourse of development. The question of women within neoliberalism for the authors becomes a tool in order to integrate women in capital production for surplus value. Similarly Bedford (2005) argues that development programs that seek to 'empower' women reproduce heteronormative roles between men and women or reverse them, not attending to the power hierarchies that are not transgressed or confronted. Development, so Bedford (2005) renders brown women victims of their 'savage' brown male partners.

This thesis focuses on the expansion of human rights language in women's movements in Lebanon and seeks to trace the influence of neoliberal policies and the language of human rights in relation to laws and regulations. It seeks to engage in a conversation concerning questions of women's emancipation and ways in which articulations of resistance of self-identified feminist movements navigate hegemonic discourses. Give the complexity of the social space in Lebanon, particular attention is given to ways in which sectarianism, race, and class operate in the construction of the category of the subject of Lebanese women, while simultaneously avoiding to reproduce

Lebanese women as one.

In order to elaborate on what I mean by absorption of neoliberalism for women's movements and collectives, and how the links between human rights language and practices are highly influential on the shaping of feminist collective practices, I would like to draw on the example of the engagement of *Nasawiya* in the initiative "Take Back the Parliament" that arose in the past two years. First and in order to form an understanding of the links I would like to go back to the UN women website where they elaborate on the importance of including women in the political life through voting and running for elections, and including women in the army as peace keeping soldiers. Women's representation through quotas in parliaments have surfaced intensely for the past couple of years and have become one of the causes that some women rights groups hold and mobilize for. Part of the resolution about women participation in political life focuses on the following argument:

> *Reaffirming* the important role of women in the prevention and
> resolution of conflicts and in peace building and the need for
> Member States and the United Nations system to increase
> the role of women in decision-making with regard to
> conflict prevention and resolution and the rebuilding of
> post-conflict societies, in accordance with Security Council
> resolution 1325 (2000) of 31 October 2000 and its subsequent
> follow-up resolutions, as well as other relevant United Nations
> resolutions (United Nations, 2012).

The latter does not only essentialize women as peaceful, thus going back to the women as mothers and natural peace keepers argument, docile bodies that are vulnerable to war and outside the sphere of conflict in which war takes place. But the situation is much more complex. This resolution specifically was used by the US government in order to invade countries in the name of protecting women. Engaging women in the

formal political sphere is one of the significant initiatives in the historical present. While the UN is pushing towards engaging women in the formal political sphere, especially in the global south and in the Arab world, *Nasawiya's* 'Take Back the Parliament' (TBP) initiative became an affirmation of the influence of the UN on the feminists movements, rather than emerging out of the feminist collective.

TBP is an initiative designed by civil society activists, among them a few *Nasawiya* members, who aimed towards taking back the parliament from the current political class, and engaging women in the formal political life through providing alternative women candidates to run for elections in 2013. Even though the initiative eventually fell apart, my aim here is to highlight the link between the UN resolutions and its embodiment and influence on the feminist collective.

After *Nasawiya,* and especially its leadership, started engaging with TBP and holding intensive mobilization meetings for this project, and hence marginalizing other ongoing projects within *Nasawiya,* a large number of its members resigned from the feminist collective as a political statement that refuses to align with the sectarian system in order to get to power. This new vision of *Nasawiya,* one that supported TBP brought forth many questions and conflicts within the collective, eventually leading to the resignation of the core members of *Nasawiya.* The most prominent debate that emerged was concerning the collective's relationship to the state. The resignations were a profound refusal to legitimize the Lebanese state's existence in its current sectarian form, which is one of the main sources of oppression of women and other marginalized categories that members of *Nasawiya* have been working with since its inception.

Conceptual Framework: A Conversation about Emancipation

      Conversations concerning emancipation as a political project beyond the rights language that this thesis engages in draws on Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) assemblage theory. Assemblage theory challenges reductionist analysis of social paradigms, unpacks them on the basis of multiplicity, and traces their temporal and spatial contexts. Assemblage theory will allow me to explore the Lebanese social and political contexts due to its ability to connect dots of multiplicity that are linked to each other, where the closer these concepts are to each other the wider the gap between them is rendered. Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p. 29) argue that "language stabilizes around a capital, it forms a bulb." Therefore there is no center for language, but many centers in which it stabilizes and establishes itself around. Given this thesis attempt to understand more fully institutions in Lebanon and the way they function and interact, their language of oppression, history and its relation to the human rights language, drawing on this framework provides the possibility to trace what happens when there is "no mother tongue" but a more powerful language within a political multiplicity. It allows for a more nuanced analysis of processes whereby the predominant language of rights gets translated into multiple political geographical languages within a global hegemonic discourse.

      This thesis relies on assemblage theory not only to envision the Lebanese feminist political realm as a rhizome, but as a rounded rhizome globe with many knots that get reproduced through cycles of connected discourses and contexts,

> A rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic
> chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative
> to the arts, sciences, and social struggles. A semiotic chain is like
> a tuber agglomerating very diverse acts, not only linguistic, but
> also perceptive, mimetic, gestural, and cognitive: there is no
> language in itself, nor are there any linguistic universals, only

a throng of dialects, patois, slangs, and specialized languages
(Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p.28).

This thesis traces these connections through an examination and exploration of the women question in Lebanon not as one fixed fact frozen into an ahistorical frame, but rather one that tries to understand where this language of mobilization comes from and where does it go. I try to understand how mobilization for the law came into being and what is at stake, and what is lost, in the constant lobbying for the law. How does the law becomes a fetish in which it is desired. By exploring the relations between sectarianism, class, gender and the desire for the law embodied in the human rights language, I attempt to understand how a state produces difference thus complicating emancipation.

The rhizome-rounded globe will facilitate the exploration of how feminist movements are connected to the rest of the world's human rights language and politics. Moreover explore the connection between the feminist discourse and tools of mobilization and NGOs. The challenge lies in relating everyday lives of individuals, communities, ideologies, happenings, activisms and ambitions to international human rights politics without centering human rights language as the center of activism. But what is a center is it outside or inside structure? Derrida argues that the center is outside the structure because it is distanced from structure and has become decentralized. Moreover, assemblage theory as a tool to understand the social as productive, given that multiplicity can take different forms in Lebanon, for example, what constitutes "Lebaneseness" can contradict with what constitutes a feminist; yet again these multiple identities can be found in one person. This thesis does not take identities as a given static identifications, but as a process of becoming. I am more interested in the formation of

subjectivities of how people meet, how subjects select sometimes to be political and to transfer their politics and contesting ideologies to the political realm of feminist debate. Consequently, understanding the rights language through the Lebanese feminist movements and women's rights NGOs entails understanding both of them, understanding the actors in them, the individuals that put action and life into the work of politics. This begs the question of what constitutes 'Lebanese-ness'. This is a central question in this thesis that tries to look at the production of 'Lebanese-ness' as a historical category that 'functions' in different ways in different sets of discourses. Lebanon is an identity-producing country where the multiplicity of each individual's identity cannot be reduced to a singular one, moreover it cannot be simplified without historical context and analyses. This difference, as I argued before, and I continue to argue through out this thesis is constantly produced as other in order to legitimize the existence of state as the protector and the uniter of the nation. I examine how categories of distinction and exception of 'Lebanese-ness' has been historically produced to front this discourse and naturalizing the "problem of identity". Lebanese people today have multiple layers of identity: first they are born Lebanese provided they have a Lebanese father (Lebanese women cannot pass on citizenship to their children if they marry a foreigner), then they are further sorted by legal frameworks that further classify them by religion and sect. Religion and sect, along with class, are essential components in the formation of Lebanese subjectivity. Furthermore, Lebanese identity is highly gendered. Another layer of identity is the families past and political affiliations with sect and militia movements that dictate which political party and 'side' of the country they belong to.

This multiplicity of components is essential to engage in conversations about rights language since rights are defined according to each layer alone and to multiple layers at the same time. I question how a hegemonic concept such as human rights where equality for all is suggested as a solution for the ills of the world functions when it is confronted with such a complex layer of local identities. The question here stretches beyond identities to become an exploration of how these identitarian narratives are produced and normalized and why, and how in turn this affects modes of resistance to or collaboration with the hegemonic. Hall (2000) argues that identity is not stable; it is a process that is not complete but materializes through a discourse, a process that is constantly reproduced by elements around it.

Methodology & Fieldwork

The research for this thesis was conducted in Beirut where I did my fieldwork for three months with two Lebanese women communities: *Nasawiya and Kafa.* I chose to work with these groups for their ability to represent the range of categories that I am interested in understanding more fully. *Kafa*, for example, has been working on passing a law against domestic violence for over five years, while *Nasawiya* has aligned with them in order to lobby for that law. My fieldwork with those two groups allowed me to study how each of these groups view emancipation and through what languages they maneuver the realm of Lebanese politics.

This research tries to make sense out of what Law (2004) calls the mess of the social. I interviewed members and former members of *Nasawiya* as well as independent activists that are engaged in the feminist struggle. The analysis in this thesis are based on personal encounters and formal interviews and side talks that took place through out the years of my engagement in *Nasawiya* and all the social events and political mobilization I was engaged in. I am, and was involved politically with the groups which I research at various points. Hence I had easy access to the target members I wanted to interview. I reflect through out this thesis as an individual within the collectives, as one that attended meetings, protests, and various types of mobilization over six years. The open-ended interviews include questions that first unpacked the complexity of the Lebanese self-identified feminist subjectivities and those of NGOs women's groups. The second phase of fieldwork focused on tracing and critically engaging in a discussion about emancipation with my interlocutors as individuals and political actors at the same time. Having been part of the Lebanese feminist collective community, I find it challenging to be critical of these collectives. Yet, this thesis aims to not only treat *Nasawiya* and *Kafa* as subjects for this study, but also to provide a platform for pushing conversations and debates further.

During my field work in Beirut in the three-month between December 2013 and February 2014 I did not interview any of the *Kafa* board group members, or *Nasawiya* leaders but people that volunteered in mobilizing for the passing for the law with *Kafa* who were either independent activists that are not affiliated with any group, or present or former *Nasawiya* members. Part of why I avoided interviewing leaders from both groups I am working with is out of a methodology that is attentive to the power hierarchies that

get formed and give voice to certain people in leadership positions in knowledge production. Usually interviews focus on the leaders of any group, for a variety of reasons, one of them is that the leaders are always the visible people in collectives which mostly results in reproducing in every research the same things said. A phenomenon that I tried to avoid in my research, especially given my privilege of being part of the collective, thus knowing the people in it and having easy access to interviewing its members away from the leadership. I sought to produce an alternative discourse to the ones that over and over "speak of the same things with the same people" as one of my interlocutors commented while I interviewed her.

Chapter Outline

In the following chapters, I discuss the law, the influence of human rights language on both the feminist collective and the women rights group. Moreover I try to draw on the perception of the law, the fetishism and desire around the law. Finally I try to provide the reader with an imagination of an emancipated Beirut through the imagination of my interlocutors.

In chapter three I discuss CEDAW and the law, moreover I try to understand and unpack the entanglement of the human rights language of CEDAW with the current lobbying for the law by the feminist movement. In chapter two as well I question the law as and its limitation as a strategy as a step in the process of women emancipation. Also, I engage in a conversation and an analysis with the interlocutors I interviewed. I analyze the contradiction in the desire for the law, and the knowledge that law alone is not enough.

In chapter four where I try to break down and understand what is the base of the law fetish and how is this deep desire for the law is being produced through the concealment of the power relationships that take place while producing this desire. How is it that it becomes so desired and how does it complicate the project of a process of emancipation.

In chapter five I draw a map of the imagination of my interlocutors and build on this imagination in order to analyze and understand Lebanon. I engage in a conversation with my interlocutors about imagination and emancipation, and the importance of imagining beyond the structured system we live in, that produced the structural violence and structural injustice we face everyday. Finally, I conclude that in order to engage in the process of emancipation, the feminist collective or the feminist subjectivities that are being constructed constantly need to pause on an individual and collective level and reflect on the neoliberal mode of thinking and the production of the desire for the law and get critical of it, in order for any present and future movement that is emerging to move forward with the debate about emancipation.

Chapter three

The (im) possibilities of the law as a strategy to end domestic violence against women in Lebanon

Introduction

This chapter explores how and why the law as a tool of emancipation became a mode of thinking for Lebanese feminist activists. I interrogate the tactics of human rights institutions and their influence in solidifying state as the reference for rights and highlight it's problematic. Through my interlocutors I question the rule of law and engage in an analysis of their opinions around the law as a strategy of emancipation. Consequently I ask, what are the im(possibilities) of the law in the process of women emancipation.

In 2008 *Kafa* in alliance with *Nasawiya* began mobilizing the larger public in support of a domestic violence law. At that time discussing domestic violence was a taboo. Encounters spoke of discomfort and surprise on the part of people to raise these issues in public. Given years of work by 2014 *Kafa* managed to not only agitate for legal reform by pressuring the government to address domestic violence, but most significantly it succeeded in making domestic violence visible as a social problem.

Since 2008 the alliance has been active with advertising campaigns, protests, and talking to women in the streets concerning domestic violence on international women's day in various cities in North and South Lebanon in addition to Beirut. Due to the efforts of the alliance reporting of domestic violence has significantly increased since 2008.

Thawra Nasawiyi (Feminist Revolution).

The labor of the alliance was divided between the two main organizations. *Kafa,* due to its relationships with the government and members of parliament focused on lobbying and formal advertising in support of domestic violence legislation, while *Nasawiya,* concentrated on mobilization, organizing protests and sit ins. Mobilization in support of domestic violence legislation also included publishing in newspapers and feminist journals such as *Sawt Al Niswa,* [3] appearing on talk shows on national and international television, and establishing a presence in social media.

Domestic violence legislation has been fraught with tensions on the level of the state. Drafted in year 2007, the draft law was submitted to a committee for further deliberation. Prime ministers Samir El Jesser, Imad Al Hout, Ali Ammar, Michael El Helou, Ghassan Moukhayber, Gilber Zwein and Chant Jenjenian were the members of this committee. They represent most of the sectarian parties in Lebanon. Nizar Saghie, a lawyer well known for his support of controversial issues, commented as follows:

> Opposition to the law, with its latest version amended
> to include protection of other family members, is
> especially strong among communities of Lebanon's
> Muslim sects. The latter perceive the law as a fundamental
> threat to the family, a contravention of Sharia principles,
> and an impending danger to the prerogatives of religious
> courts. Similar fears were expressed about the consequences
> of the measures applied under the law for the protection of
> children at risk.The original PWDV draft law was proposed
> by the Lebanese NGO, KAFA (Enough), as a means
> to protect women in particular. However, it underwent
> several amendments as it moved through government
> legislative channels. Amending the proposal was a means to
> address the concerns of opponents and soften their stance.
> Significant amendments by the special parliamentary sub-committee,
> for example, took place right after several Islamic associations
> intensified their pressure against passing such a law.

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[3] Sawt Al Niswa is a feminist zine founded by a Nasawiya member and published under the Nasawiya umbrella. Currently became an independent initiative due to political conflicts among the founders and Nasawiya.

Under the guise of upholding the principle of equality
regarding the protection of all family members -not just
women- against acts of violence, the sub-committee willfully
altered the law in such a way as to redefine these acts. Punitive
provisions aimed at acts most characteristic of males' traditional
authoritarianism, such as marital rape or female forced marriage,
were taken out of the draft. Acts unrelated in principle to
violence, such as adultery and prostitution, were
included   as   acts   of   violence."   (Saghie,   2013).

According to Saghie, the strength of the domestic violence law was watered down
by shifting its target from protecting women from domestic violence to the family.
Moreover issues such as marital rape were excluded due to the influence of the religious
establishment on the committee. Even though Saghie focuses on Muslim clerics in
particular, it should be noted that Christian clerics did not take a stand in support of
marital rape, thus contributing subtly to its exclusion.

While the religious establishment was not formally part of the committee, they
nonetheless wield tremendous influence over legislation in Lebanon. The use and control
of women's bodies by the religious establishment is not limited to the domestic violence
law but constitutes a de facto regulatory body that interferes directly in women's lives,
their sexuality, abortion rights by privileging the family as a unit and hence maintain the
particular social power of the Lebanese state.

The challenges to the domestic violence law took place the minute the draft was
submitted to the committee. Struggles over the content of the law, especially the
exclusion of the marital rape clause, on January 14, 2012. Members of *Nasawiya* were
actively involved in mobilizing for the January 14 protest by appearing in talk shows and
on radio programs to discuss reasons for the protest. They also began a spontaneous
campaign of writing "fight rape, January 2014" on the mirrors of every bathroom,

restaurants, bars, coffee shops and shopping malls they went to. Graffiti was another tool to promote awareness, such as *7areb el eghtisab* (fight rape), anonymous activists designed a graffiti stencil that portrayed the Sunni mufti Qabani saying *maa el eghtisab* (support rape) that was sprayed on walls in Beirut.

The night before the protest a group of feminist friends came together to prepare banners and write down the chants to lead the protest. The chants varied between *ya neib 'oul el haq btehmy el mejrem walla la'* (MP say the truth are you protecting the criminal or not) *and lal horiyi lal horiyi, thawra thawra nasawiyi* (achieving freedom entails a feminist revolution).

The week before the protest was a very intense one, the collective or at least the feminist comrades I was around were full of hope and excitement. There was a sense that this was a historical opportunity to push questions of rape and marital rape into public discourse. While only 600 people participated in the 'Fight Rape' demonstration, it was a huge shift for the feminist movement in Lebanon, since the first feminist protest of such nature that took place in 2008 barely had fifty people that attended it. 'Fight Rape' did not only shed the light on marital rape itself, but it broke taboos around the issue of rape itself. Hundreds of activists across a wide political spectrum marched together to object to the elision of rape in the proposed law. The most striking banners held in the protest was one that said "if someone raped your mother, would you call him daddy?".

In 2013 another protest to pressure the government into passing the domestic violence law took place in Beirut, whereby women rights groups, and especially women rights groups of Lebanese political parties joined the protest. It did came as a surprise this burst out into protesting from women from the political parties, previously they would

provide symbolic support by sending one representative on the behalf of their party. This time, they came in bigger numbers carrying their party flags and advertising their parties. This incident of being visible in women's rights protests might be part of their on going political campaigns to advertise for themselves and collect political supporters. It is however significant that 2013 in specific was the year that the UN declared as the year to fight violence against women. Thus suddenly women rights groups from political parties, who have members of the committee belonging to the same party in the parliament distorting the domestic violence law, were in the streets protesting against domestic violence where they still supported their parties. The latter sparked a lot of controversy in the debate among feminists themselves and to my knowledge this debate escalated the tensions among the group. For example, one of the organizers of the protest burst out in tears as she saw how the women rights group of the Future Party took the opportunity of the media existence in order to bring up what is referred to as *Al Shahid* (the martyr Rafiq Harriri). The Future Party, a Sunni Party headed by the Harriri family, played a prominent role in mobilizing for the Cedar Revolution after the assassination of Rafiq Harriri. The same family owns the Solider company, responsible for the controversial reconstruction of Beirut after the civil war. The Future Party, furthermore, was among the actors imposing the Sunni Mufti's agenda in opposing marital rape to be included in the deliberations of the committee studying the domestic violence law. Hence, the participation of the political parties in the demonstration raised uncomfortable and tense issues regrading the imbrication of capitalism, neoliberalism and the direction that the debates of the domestic violence law was taking.

The tensions within *Nasawiya* itself, and among the women rights groups, though stood in stark contrast to the death of four women in those two weeks due to domestic violence in Lebanon. Due to the intensity of violence and domestic violence crimes reported in 2014, on the 8th of March 2014 (one month away from writing this chapter) according to *Kafa's* announcement on their facebook page, the women in Lebanon will take the streets in order to pressure the government for a legislative session in order to pass the law against domestic violence. The upcoming protest is supposed to happen under the slogan "If it takes the street for legislation, then we are coming." As I wrote this thesis the protest did happen. IWD 2014 witnessed one of the biggest protests in the history of Lebanese women's mobilization following the civil war. Thousands of people took to the street in order to ask Nabih Berri, the speaker of the Lebanese parliament since 1992 (and the head of the Amal movement), to put together a parliamentary meeting in order to pass the law against domestic violence without any distortions. I would like to draw on the problematic position of asking political figures such as Nabih Berri to sympathize with, and take up the killing of women as a result of domestic violence, as an urgent matter for legislative intervention. Nabih Berri, along with most of the parliament members, including Micheal Aoun (head of the Free Patriotic Movement), Samir Jaajaa (head of the Lebanese Forces Party) and many others, were important actors perpetuating the civil war. They took part in crimes against humanity in the war's sectarian violence and massacres of Lebanese and Palestinian communities. Given that today these figures make up a significant part of the Lebanese government, for the feminist community there can not but be a moment of irony asking them to feel sympathy for the death of women in Lebanon, and legitimizing their rule by requesting that they

legislate on behalf of woman to begin with. This raises multiple questions about the limitation of law as a strategy to achieve justice for women and people within the Lebanese context. Therefore in this chapter I engage with my interlocutors in a conversation about the law, and question its limitations and possibilities as a tool of emancipation.

Over the past seven years many changes have taken place in the structure of feminist collectives, many groups were formed, and many others fell apart. One thing did not change though, the ongoing political debate, and the ongoing violence and its intensity, which raises questions regarding the efficacy of the strategies and tactics adopted. Hence it is necessary to reflect on the past and the present, the disfunction and incapability of the law to grant women equality.

The law being a language of rights might now be one of the biggest problems, language is an ongoing process of dialogue that is in constant change. The law as a process of legislating and granting power to government to practice control over people living in Lebanon I argue is a core problem. The law against domestic violence in the Lebanese feminist collective jumped beyond being a language and molded itself into a form of terrain of thinking. Harvery (2007) argues "Neoliberalism has, in short, became hegemonic as a mode of discourse and has pervasive effect on ways of thought and political-economic practices to the point where it has been incorporated into commonsense way we interpret, live in, and understand the world". The dangers of neoliberal discourses infiltrating ethics and ideologies is that they have become common sensical and repetitive to the extent that one starts to adopt them with no sense of reflection or critique. Moreover, even when there is a sense of critique and a sharp gaze at

how power functions, the immediacy of the crisis demands action: women are dying now. The problem here cannot only be limited to a neoliberal analysis of the crisis, the problem is deeper and more much complex, the problem of justice in itself.

Besides the fact that, as I argued above, the capitalist, sectarian, patriarchal, neoliberal, social and economical systems in Lebanon produce fertile grounds for violence against women, the concept of justice is always already problematic. It raises the question, when does justice takes place? Justice supposedly takes place after injustice happens. Therefore the perception of the concept of justice within the frame of the law assumes that injustice should happen for justice to take place. Therefore the framework of the law, even though proven along the years that it does not, and will not stop violence from happening, up until today gives the illusion that the law will stop the perpetrator from violating the violated. Law works after violence occurs, it does not address the basis out of which violence emerges. Hence, we remain stuck in a vicious cycle of reproduction of violence.

I have attempted to present a brief historical background about the Domestic Violence Law, it goes without saying, that these brief pages do not give justice to all the efforts and mobilization and political shifts that happened in these years. A detailed historical narration of movements though is not within the scope of this research.

Why not CEDAW?

With the global emergence of the language that lobbies for equality among men and women, turning every discussion about human life and quality into rights discourses via global governance bodies such as the United Nations (UN), the Committee on the

Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) emerged to become the basic text along which equality among genders is navigated and evaluated. Irrespective of how CEDAW came to be, and with respect to the activist that brought it to fruition, feminist legal theorists have highlighted the problems of CEDAW itself and its working mechanisms. Moreover it may be noted that although

> The Universal Declaration of Human Rights begins
> by asserting "the inherent dignity" and "the equal"
> and inalienable rights of all members of the human family,"
> it turns immediately to the state. In doing so it underlines the
> fact that the universal character of the rights bearing
> person is made the responsibility of sovereign states, each of
> which has jurisdiction over a limited group within the
> human family (Assad, 2007, p.6).

As Assad argues human rights cannot be disentangled from the state's power and it's process of practicing it's power on people. Human rights while turning to the state tend to reproduce a cycle of oppression since a state, such as Lebanon for example, is one that is produces differences as othering in order to reign. As I noted in the previous chapter regarding Lebanon, a state with a criminal history of civil war and a neoliberal one par excellence.

Merry (2003, p. 943) argues, "CEDAW is law without sanctions." She contends that CEDAW depends on dynamics of shaming and blaming. Shaming and blaming, though efficient depending on context, takes us back to questioning how international human rights treaties work. If a law without economical or military sanctions can influence nations than there is a certain power hierarchy deployed in the dynamics between the UN, and the world. There's a need to recognize here that UN treaties have been used before in order to impose sanctions on countries for 'human rights' violations;

not to mention the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan in order to save the woman for 'peace keeping' purposes. The latter is not an exception but a tool of how the UN functions, in the words of Harvey, as the left hand of the empire. The empire is the new order in which the world functions according to Michael Hardt, Antonio Negri (2000). It is the new political order of globalization where the power center is deteritoralized and dispersed in various centers of powers that makes it possible to view them tangibly and taking a hold of them. The UN makes possible the maintenance of the new power order of the world via the bodies and legislations of the UN. At the same time, sanctions on countries are only moral. Countries who are working against human rights are symbolically criticized and problematized by the international community.

I contend here that pressuring governments via shaming and blaming makes visible the power of the UN institutions, and give an intangible value to laws that are perceived as 'progressive' for women. These laws such as CEDAW have become the measure by which the world measures modernity of nation states and their ability to apply justice. Whereby justice becomes a tool in which subjects of powers are domesticated. Therefore states with 'progressive' legislations (such as ones that signed and applied CEDAW in it's local laws) are perceived to be modern in contrast to the states that either did not sign such treaties or signed them with reservations that make them dysfunctional. The definition of a country as modern provides it with lot of privileges, in which certain countries are realized as leaders of the world today, and others as backward and underdeveloped, thus liable to be colonized. In this sense what they actually accomplish is another tool for regulation and global governance via gender governance; rather than equality or emancipation, especially since the terms of reference or the standard against

which things are measured is so out of synchronization with what happens and how life is structured in other parts of the 'global south.'

If it is assumed that treaties such as CEDAW are efficient in providing a better quality of life for women especially under the umbrella of the law, Harding (2008, p. 1) argues that western modernity is extremely distant from the interest, needs and desire of both men and women who are its products, questioning how western modernity can be possible for non-western people under such circumstances. Merry (2003, p. 945) reminds us that even countries that have passed CEDAW and applied them still struggle with domestic violence. Even countries in the West that are perceived as modern nations, so Merry, have failed to set the tools in which the process of emancipation of women is possible. But what is equality, what is freedom in a world governed by big institutions and run on the imagination and desire for modernity? Taylor (Taylor, 2002, p.92) reflects these questions as follows:

> The central to Western modernity is a new conception of the moral order of society. At first this moral order was just an idea in the minds of some influential thinkers, but later it came to shape the social imaginary of large strata, and then eventually whole societies. It has now become so self-evident to us; we have trouble seeing it as one possible conception among others. The mutation of this view of moral order into our social imaginary is the development of certain social forms that characterize Western modernity: the market economy, the public sphere, the self-governing people, among others.

Therefore rights and the desire of equality became curbed by morals that are institutionalized via western modernity in our every day. It became unquestionable as Taylor argues, with barely any critical gaze as to how it sustains the circulation of capital in open markets that by itself creates the gaps, economical gaps, racism and sexism and

violence against women and everybody else. The latter are the grounds on which these inequalities have the possibility to be produced.

One of the major problems with global legislation such as CEDAW is that it permits reservations based on arguments regarding culture and tradition. Arguments concerning reservations hold that culture is a static body instead of an ever-changing process of becoming. It is worthwhile mentioning that law making, policies and treaties are in a nutshell based on a body of generalization of issues inflicted by power on human beings. Penny (2010, p. 87) argues that "Policy making assumes that women and men are fixed, binary and essentially differently located necessarily has the capacity to improve their well-being." Governance views the world in a binary of genders as men and women, thus other genders, class, race, geographical location, color, ideologies and so on – which are part of human subjectivity constructions – get marginalized. The latter puts both genders in a fixed position thus crippling any discussion for those who use the human right treaties beyond the binary of men and women. Consolidating categories facilitates the process of control over people that neoliberal states aspire to. By categorizing people into genders, it is easier to regulate them. One cannot regulate the uncategorized, the unstructured since it does not have a center into which it can be boxed and ruled. Therefore, human right treaties by failing to address more than one category – or by failing to de-categorize - tend to reproduce the same cycle of subordination of women by dealing with categories as if they exist outside of the structures and dynamics of power that produces them. The failure of achieving a more inclusive, less categorical approach that includes analysis of capitalism and racism within gender and sectarianism institutionalizes discrimination via the state. It empties violence from its content, where

violence becomes perceived as the problem rather than a symptom of the dysfunctional system of othering in which difference is produced. Focusing solely on violence against women and providing solutions to it in laws renders mobilization for equality focuses on one aspect of the problem while the roots of the problems beyond the biological body get ignored and rendered invisible. The latter is dangerous because it endangers the mobilization against violence into falling in a cycle of dealing with issues superficially. Race, class, temporality, geographical location, color, privilege and other aspects have to be taken into consideration in analyzing any social problem.

The identity category based approach of the CEDAW and the UN in general empties those categories out of their contents and context, as well as structures under which they are produced and deem them pure victims not attending to the biosocial, economical and racial content they have inside them.

Problematizing Gendered Categories

The crippling effect of creating categories in which the rights language functions, acts on multiple levels of plurality. Brown for example argues

> Liberal discourse converts political identity into essentialized
> private interest, disciplinary power converts interest into
> normativized social identity manageable by regulatory
> regimes. Thus disciplinary power politically neutralizes
> entitlement claims generated by liberal individuation, whereas
> liberalism politically neutralizes rights claims generated by
> disciplinary identities. (Brown, 1993, p.394).

Mobilization around gender based identities and categories essentialize these categories. It makes it easier for the state apparatus to police these categories and discipline them. The category of women, for example, carries within it multiple categories. One of the

categories is the victim category that is needed the most for purposes of legislating and simultaneous depoliticizing of the political fight against violence. The politics of naming and giving meaning is one that is mostly created in the field of the political (Bourdieu, 1985, p. 730). The act of providing meaning to something becomes the act of attributing a sense of value attached to it. The act of triggering a sense of realization of something attached to the word. A victim category depoliticized is a victim crippled and frozen outside of space and time, with no sense of moving forward or even backward. Moreover a victim erases everything else but victimhood. The way in which victimhood is being dealt with within human rights discourses disregards all the social, political and economic situations that allows violence to happen and concentrates only on the victim as if victimhood is timeless. A victim is a word linked to pity, helping and saving. Saving, mostly is the act of feeling better about one's self without attending to the power relations that come into play by someone having certain set of privilege, that entitle them to help another person, disregarding how these structures and hierarchies of power pass unnoticed.

> I could never relate to the victim category; as a matter of
> fact I found it oppressive in its own way. The essentialization
> of being an Arab woman and the exceptionalism that it includes
> make violence looks like it only happens to Arab
> women - like it doesn't happen outside in Europe or
> example. (Layla, December 2013).

Layla is a feminist activist and former *Nasawiya* member who quit the collective due to political clashes based on her own perception of feminist politics. Layla was a prominent figure that had a working position that gave her access to attending many international conferences for women rights. She always expressed her discomfort with the discourse of reproducing Arab women as victims in international human rights

meetings. That issue resurfaced in my interview with her. She views this victim category

production as a pre-produced discursive narrative that repeats itself in a constant pattern.

This pattern is mostly plotted in a way that pleases the presumed stereotype about 'Arab'

women as equally oppressed to a predominantly white audience. This narrative, as Layla

discusses, is oppressive by itself. The position of victim, with the weak docile body that

gets inflicted on people from the 'Arab' world for example, and Lebanon in specific,

assumes that regardless of who you are, you are a victim of violence and thus

depoliticizes the voice of these women and throws them in a cage of empathy from a

western audience, not to mention Arab audiences. In her take on "Do Muslim women

really need saving?" Lila Abu Lughod (2002, p.784) argues that

> Instead of questions that might lead to the exploration
> of global interconnections, we were offered ones that
> worked to artificially divide the world into separate
> spheres recreating an imaginative geography of West
> versus East, us versus Muslims.

The western need to victimize Arab women leaves no space for any critique for the west

itself. The production of discourses of victims constitutes one set of problems, the

production of local victims mapped across the global south constitutes another set of

problems. Local victim production cannot be separated from the global victim

production. When the word victim is mentioned, it comes from a background of

witnessing various human rights campaigns against violence against women. For

example, one NGO logo features a violated women with a tear running down her face,

this same NGO relies on a discourse of women as mothers to evoke empathy. Other

campaigns invite men to man up and not beat women but 'protect' them. The victim

production narrative relies on the same bodies of gender governance that make use of

creating it. While the west produces Arab Muslim women as victims in order to invade

countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan, they simultaneously support UN treaties focused

on protecting women from war and violence. These same bodies that allow the use of

treaties of human rights to breach human rights by invading countries and propagating

wars – are the same forces that mostly fund local NGOs and movements that work on

women rights issues. Therefore the cycle cannot be completed without the

local/international victim production. It is virtually impossible for local NGOs to receive

funding from international governance bodies without either empowering women or

saving women from some kind of violence as consequences of it 'culture' or 'religion.'

Victims are produced globally and locally simultaneously, local victims are the alibi for

the west to highlight its modern face and second to produce the global victims based on

statistics and numbers produced locally.

The stakes in the politics of compromise

> Sara a former *Nasawiya* member and a feminist activist states that

>> There are a lot of compromises that need to be made if you
>> want a law to pass in order to protect women from domestic
>> violence. For example if you want to change the
>> discourse against domestic violence, you have to
>> victimize the woman. There is no escaping it (Sara, January 2014).

The use of the notion of compromise raises questions with regards to the way Sara views

laws and the victim category. Compromise is when the feminist movement for example

accepts (even when it is critical of) the fact that women need to be produced as victims in

order for them to be able to mobilize for a law that protects them from violence. The

victim category has been historically a challenge for various types of feminists to break

out from, given that being identified as a victim simultaneously puts a woman in a

vulnerability position thus reproducing over and over the inherent narrative that women

are vulnerable therefore they need to be protected. Protection by itself is problematic since protecting someone entails sometimes practicing certain types of power over her. Therefore it is important to question, what is the politics of compromise and how does it get deployed in the context of the law against domestic violence in Lebanon?

It is worth mentioning here that throughout all the years of my involvement in the feminist movement and through my interaction with women rights groups and NGOs, there was a deep sense of disillusionment with the law itself as the ultimate magic solution that will change the situation by itself. All the women I interviewed from various backgrounds, sects, ideologies, religion, geographical location, educational background, race, gender, and orientation, stressed that the law is the first step towards the process of emancipation but not the only step. There was an ongoing realization that laws will not change the way in which society deals with women bodies especially in matters of violence against women. But at the same time, a small portion of women that were interviewed disregarded the idea that the law as a solution at all in the first place. Those women in specific – the ones who did not believe passing a law will change anything – hinted towards the need for a more broader inclusive politics in dealing with violence against women and other matters. Manal a feminist activist and a student argues,

> If you apply one law to everyone, what if it doesn't work
> on all of them? Law is a document that is written in
> some paragraph, or book, but it will never be able
> to cover all the situations that could happen. That makes
> it impossible for any law to be free of discrimination.
> (Manal, December 2013).

Manal's argument about the law realizes that after all it is a document, and even though it is simply a document that is written, it has the power of legislation. It states that yes, the law gets applied sometimes, and does not get applied at other times, but mostly it is one document that is responsible for the lives of millions of people. The law is a document that includes certain power relations that embodies regulation and order. Thus, law organizes the lives of millions of women from all type of classes, backgrounds, sects, it deals with their differences as a means to segregate and hierarchize, rather than viewing

this difference as inevitable within multiplicity. The law is a bundle of relationships and power, open to interpretations all the time even in the moment in which it is enforced; it is a reflection of the social relations that are there, and hence there's a need to deal with the social that produces the law. The 'law' is embodied already within how movements imagine emancipation. The law cannot give justice to every woman equally, not to mention that the people that are drafting these laws and applying them are after all human being that are from certain backgrounds and ideologies themselves.

A second interlocutor who thinks of the law as a failed strategy to emancipate women is Noha. Noha is not comfortable with either the term feminist or activist as labels that were distorted by the practices of some feminist activists as she describes. These feminist activists according to her identify as activists and feminists yet again use their privileges in order to oppress other people, gain leadership momentum and abuse the crisis around inequality in order to make money through funding. Noha's sense of refusal to identify with these labels come from long years of engagement in the feminist collective and civil society. When I asked Noha if she believes in the law as a tool to bring equality to the daily lives of women, the conversation went as such

> Maya: Do you believe that the law against domestic
> violence is a good strategy of feminist politics?
>
> Noha: No, is it important to see things from different
> perspective. Do I believe that the law against domestic
> violence would emancipate women? No. But for example
> if you want to work with the law, it is important to work
> on lobbying to allow women to pass their Lebanese
> nationality to their kids and husbands. Law works on
> different issues in different strategies. As for the domestic
> violence law, To give the option to for women for example
> to report to the police that she was beaten up, ok, maybe
> her husband will let her go because of this, and
> tell her if you want a divorce take it. The question is beyond

this only. The question is what happens to her in the
family and on the social level. I come from a
very violent family background; I know how violence
feels and how it take place. That why my problem
with feminists is that they speak of violence as if they are
separated from it. What would the law to protect women
from family violence do to for example women as my mother?
Provide her with protection in a shelter house? What does
it mean for a woman to move from having autonomy over
her own house to a shelter house, is that the maximum
we aspire for? Either staying at home while being
beaten up by your husband or put you in a shelter house?
While we throw your husband in prison or a rehabilitation
center?".

Noha reflected on a vision that she has towards the social that transcends the social

imagination that takes the law as a legislative body that gives justice to people. Her

experience with violence made it visible for her that the strategies *Kafa* are taking to

provide women with a life outside their abusive house fail to capture a bigger wider

social problem. Providing safe houses for women does not work according to Noha. She

perceives the problem of domestic violence as one that cannot be simply solved through

reporting it the police, divorce, jailing the husband or the father, moreover providing

women with shelter houses to escape domestic violence. This statement hints that there's

a bigger problem to domestic violence that is much deeper than providing solutions of

escape or imprisonment of the husband. She also stressed that most of the feminists who

lobby against domestic violence treat it as if they are distant from it, as if they are outside

it. Thus putting them in a position of privilege that forms hierarchies of power against

those who experience violence up close and personal. Moreover reproducing out of those

whom experienced domestic violence at their homes as victims. Reproducing violence as

an exception away from their lives where violence is entrenched in everyday life details.

According to Brad Evans (2013/2014, p.3) "Violence is never is problem to be studied in

some objective or neutral fashion." Therefore by the feminists distancing themselves from the domestic violence and trying to take an objective stand towards it strips it out of its complexity, thus makes it possible for it to become a problem that can be solved by criminalizing it. Consequently, and regardless of how much one tries to define violence, violence stays as a very complex process that takes place according to various contexts. "Violence is a complex phenomenon that defies neat description. It cannot be reduced to simple explanations, for as many of its victims tell, there is no totalizing truth about violence. Nor can the experience of violence be universalized or merely thought of in terms of some institutional breakdown or failure of State"(Evans, 2013/2014, p.2). Therefore this thesis views violence as one that cannot, as Evans states, be neatly defined or reduced to simple explanations that definitions usually reduce violence to. The most important aspect about violence that this research tries to understand is how the mobilization against domestic violence is one form of the absorption of resistance of the feminist collective into modes of resistance that dissolves their mobilization into reproducing the same conditions that creates this violence.

Jihan, a leftist activist, makes another point about the contradictory disfunctionality of the law but at the same time the need for it. Jihan analyzes and discusses laws from a lawyer's perspective:

> The sociology of law putting aside sect, religion
> and Beirut, states that it is made in a way that it does not
> get applied to human beings equally. As a lawyer,
> working in law firms and getting in contact with
> how laws get applied ruined all the stuff we learned in
> school about the law. Yes the law is a tool in the hands
> of state so it can oppress/organize the lives of people by
> claiming to protect them. But at the same time and even
> though I am disillusioned passing this law by itself is a
> rupture in the system. The same system that states bluntly

that domestic violence does not exist. The same system that discriminates between men and women, allowing men to practice violence against women. It is to be acknowledged that the law by itself does not change anything on its own, Rosa Luxemburg for example when talking about revolutionary acts takes into consideration that the accumulation of forms of rupturing the system such as reform can be efficient. Therefore I cannot take a biased stand between reform through the law and mobilizing for social change against discrimination. (Jihan, January 2014).

If the sociology of law by itself states that the law is not made to be applied to all human beings equally, how about the domestic law against violence law that is discussed in this thesis given that the first target and beneficiary of the law against domestic violence are supposedly women. Women who are already in a state that discriminates against them based on various reasons it produces. There are a lot of contradictions in the way Jihan views the law. Even though as she stated she is a lawyer and her experience with the law disillusioned her of its efficiency in providing equality to all people (which is what law claims to do) she still believes that the law is useful in providing justice. Jihan, like other feminists interviewed in this thesis, were at some point active in participating in the protests to ask for the passing of the domestic law. Others have mobilized for years for protest whether fight rape, or against sexual harassment protests, or simple protest on international women's day.

The ability of the law to provide justice according to Jihan, is not derived by the law as a egalitarian entity by itself, but functions as a tool in order to form a rupture in the body of the discriminatory system that does not admit that domestic violence is practiced against women. In addition when domestic violence or any other type of violence is practiced against women, the woman herself is mostly blamed for the violence by questioning how she 'deserved' that violence from her husband. Question such as "what did you do to anger your husband so he hit you" by the police or society are often asked to women when they try to discuss domestic violence. Questioning what was a woman wearing when she got raped, why was she out at night that late and what was she doing in

the streets are familiar questions that a lot of women hear when they talk about their experiences with the police in specific. Here, the protests themselves outside the dichotomy of whether to support the law or not become a mere opposition to acts of all types of violence against women. Moreover it is an act of objection and reclaiming of public spaces. An act of affirming and reiterating that existence in the public sphere by women is a fact, and that women are not going anywhere, especially not back to the private sphere, where supposedly they belong. The private sphere though extended to work, where work becomes a counter public that is perceived as partially private, women continue to be mostly not welcomed in the streets.

Another feminist and civil society activist in Beirut Nour discredited the law completely by saying, "The law is only a tool in the hand of state in order to curb the feminist movement into the system." (Nour, December 2013). Nour objected heavily to the ability of the law in granting women any type of equality. Her radical views discredited the law completely based on the way it emerges via certain power dynamics and privileges. Nour argues that men draft the laws, and not all of them are ready to give up their privilege. Building on Nour's statement, it is obvious that laws can be viewed as tools in the hands of the state used to derive legitimacy of it's existence even from feminist movements. If women need protection then the state should exist in order to protect them, otherwise and if we apply the same thought to all human life everyday, if there are no problems and danger, would there be a need for the state to organize? Therefore laws do not only curb feminist movements into the system, are unjust to different groups of people, discriminate against women, but they also legitimize the existence of the state itself. Therefore as long as there are laws and somebody lobbying

for laws, there will always be a state regardless whether it passes the law or not. Assuming that states need legitimacy to continue the process of protection and organization of society that created them, it does not come as a surprise that states do not work in favor of providing equality for all. That is because its existence is directly linked to the sustainable crisis of the social. The state's existence rely on problems it can solve in order for it to justify it's surveillance and authority. Again if there were no social problems, then state has no reason to exist. Of course states are a part of historical process that emerged within a certain capitalist moment of history. Taking these ideas back to the feminist collective, especially the one in Lebanon that realizes the failure of the state of the law, the question can then be asked here: Why are there contradictory statements about the law? Did the law become a terrain of thought that cannot be disentangled from achieving justice? As Laya put it, "I think laws are maybe one quarter of the battle I think maybe they are an important element, but they are definitely not everything. If not through the system then what is the alternative?". (Layla, December 2013).

The most crippling and unproductive concepts that the feminist collective suffers from in their debates about change are the alternatives for change. In the words of a feminist leader in *Nasawiya* "you either have something to say in order to be critical, provide a tactic of c change or a solution; otherwise don't speak and let the rest work." The language of solution here is foregrounded, the dealing with every part of oppression as a problem to be solved became an important part of the discourse, which fed into the adaptation of the lobbying for the law. Criticizing something for the sake of critiquing it without feeling the intimidation of these power hierarchies among those who are

working, versus those who are thinking, reflecting and being critical. This form of discursive strategy in a political collective proved to be very dangerous since it created a divide between those who are working (those who are close to the leader) and those who are observing without being given a chance to be acknowledged as someone smart enough or taken seriously enough to be included in the political work. The latter strategy tames the ability to be critical. In one of my interviews I was told by a woman that the feminist space was one of the most unwelcoming hostile spaces she has ever been to. She described how hostile the feminist space was in accepting newcomers, especially if they were not a close person to one of the founding members. I personally have witnessed the brutal attack and intimidation that people can face for simply being critical about a certain type of work without suggesting an alternative. For instance at meetings when someone gets critical of a certain political statement the answer from the leadership was mostly: well if you don't like it, then come and do it better. Derrida explains how discourses come into being. When there is no center point in which structures and language emerged everything became discourse (Derrida, 1966 p. 28). The feminist collective for example claimed that its foundation is grassroots, thus there isn't any structure of power and leadership in it. The latter as Derrida argued replaced structure of power and leadership hierarchies with a discourse of inclusion and exclusion.

If law is looked at from these points of view, as a unique language of communication between the ethical and the political that extends beyond discourse to social context, then law can be assumed as a language by it's own that communicates/dictates ethical social values and moralities. Kafka in his novel *The Trial* illustrates descriptively the impossibility of escaping the bureaucratic nature of law and

how morbid it can get; this language of the law deployed and complicated by state agents cannot and does not give justice to anyone according to Fraser (2009). She argues that the person who is giving the judicial order is after all a human being from a certain background and comes with her/his own package of ideologies. The latter makes it impossible for the law to give justice since a human being can never be fully impartial (Fraser, 2009, p.2). Feminist legal theorists such as Fraser, Mennon and Brown engaged previously have invited the feminist debate to extend to a political debate beyond the law.

Building on Aradau's (2008) insights this research reflects and argues further about the law as a tool of state control to impose surveillance and securization on borders and citizens in the name of protection. According to Aradau (2008) discourses on ethics of humanity are reduced to govermentality, in a sense that in order to feel sympathy, empathy or the need for change a person that is being subjected to injustice has to be deemed vulnerable and thus produced as a victim. The women interviewed in this research who support the passing of the domestic violence law kept reflecting on the contradictory nature of wanting the law. From their perspective the law is needed, because there is no other option. Otherwise they have to question what the alternatives are and where to start. If not within the system then where is the biggest question.

In a one on one conversations at a feminist social event I was reflecting on how complicated it is for us to start breaking out of the neoliberal mode of thinking and start imagining emancipation outside those modalities. Sara, my interlocutor wisely pointed out, who are us? You are assuming that everyone in the feminist movement wants emancipation.

> You see it is not only a mode of thinking, it is a life style,
> what do we do if we got emancipated? It might be feminism

to some of us, but to others, it is simple a business. This is
not to dismiss or undermine all the efforts the feminists
are doing, this is just a critical gaze and a questioning of
who are we? Do we want to get our hands dirty in the
streets? Or do we just want the good feeling that is
derived from deluding ourselves that we are doing
something? (Sara, January 2014).

While she talked to me I recalled moments of discussions about one of the more

controversial protests we were planning to mobilize for in *Nasawiya* and the debate was

whether we have reasons to strike with a protest at that point of time or wait until

something major happens. One part of the group that usually stressed the value of

protesting to keep visibility, keep reclaiming space and objecting– argued that if we want

emancipation, we should never get out of the street until it becomes a way of living. The

other part of the group, consisting of people that mostly needed an event to hold a protest

and were always weary of people burning out, thought of it as pure waste of resources

and was scared that people participating in such a long-term process of confrontation

with the state get drained. In a space that is very political, the space of reflecting on who

we are (mostly in majority middle class/upper middle class AUB/LAU graduates)

becomes very tight and dangerous but necessary. It is noteworthy here that not everyone

from the feminist group *Nasawiya* is middle class/upper middle class, and not every

member is a prestigious university graduate, though the leadership was. A leadership that

always framed the actions of the rest of members while presuming a structureless

hierarchy.

Chapter 4

On the politics of desire & concealment:
Notes to the left

The identifiable form of the court of law belongs to the bourgeois ideology of justice. (Foucault, 1972, p. 210)

Introduction

This chapter engages the sphere of politics and the social imagination that produces the desire for the law. I contend that the desire for the law is like a rhizome that ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains and organizations of power as Deleueze and Guatari describe it. It does not simply emerge from a one layer of cause or effect. Its base I argue is a circumscribed sphere that emerges within a certain socio - economic politics that derives its strength from the politics of concealment that the state applies to the making of everything, especially the law. If the power relations that constitute the law are concealed then the law appears as the neutral ideal solution, the desired subject-object that is lobbied for by the Lebanese feminist collective *Nasawiya* and the NGO *Kafa*. Therefore I find it crucial to disentangle and make visible the power relationships that are concealed in creating the politics of desire for laws. Nothing exists outside of power, power is the glue that holds together human relationships. But the power that I speak of in this section is one that functions to conceal the relationships it carries inside. This consequently leads to the creation hierarchies of power that produces a certain type of oppression against a certain group of people; in this research, it's the power relationships that produce the desire to law, in parallel to those that produce

domestic violence against women. This group of people can be identified by the way law is practiced with or against them. In Lebanon, as in most of the world, you don't have a choice whether you want to be ruled by the law or not, you just are. Thus it is taken for granted that the law is there, it is normalized within the social that it is what should happen for the sake of organizing society, for the sake of order. If the law is a tool to organize society and maintain order, the specificity of that which organizes society varies from one country to another. Thus what is specific about the rule of law in Lebanon is that it is one that changes according to one's religion, sect, gender and class. The law is hegemonic, it is represented as one that serves everybody, especially in Lebanon, but it is consumed by a certain class, is lobbied for by a certain class. The lobbying to the law and the process where it takes place and gets applied is not equally distributed on any level of gender or class. To state it simply, in order to go under the rule of the law you need a lawyer, which costs money. On the other hand, yes some NGOs provide people who can't afford lawyer expenses with free legal services, but here where the complexity of this whole process lies. It is important to question how do the NGOs that lobby for laws emerge? How does the whole process of lobbying become a cycle that creates NGOs. Where do these NGOs get funding from? What type of state apparatus do NGOs lobbying for laws reproduces? How do gender governance bodies that provide funds for NGOs manage to curb feminist movements into NGOs via a neoliberal agenda that seeks to tame militancy under the rule of law, generating seemingly good citizen that works within the boundaries of the control of the law, instead of being critical of the law, regulation, control and the Lebanese state itself? This complexity is what I try to unpack in this chapter.

The politics of concealment I speak of is manifested in the way the lobbying for laws proceeds. Actors or activist do not necessarily intend to reproduce a certain global governance discourse where the trials of subsumption of the feminist collective into the neoliberal system are visible. They act according to the visible in society, the normative, which is in this case having laws and lobbying for more of them. The politics of deciding what the visible cause that gets attention from the movement and is invested in goes back to leadership and the access to a certain language of human rights and funds that eventually define leadership. The circumscribed state/activist game gets more complex, when the activities of the state that produces laws and the power relationships that are within it are concealed. The law then is represented as the savior to society and activists. It is taken for granted that we need the law, but why do we need the law? Is it that we will end up killing each other if we don't get order through state and law? As Agamben (1996, p.2). observes, "In the Hobbesian foundation of sovereignty, life in the state of nature is defined only by its being unconditionally exposed to a death threat" The death threat is the one constantly hungry for protection, for preservation of life. Consequently, this exactly is what a neoliberal mode of thinking is, this simple question of killing each other, of the evil of human nature (as if there is anything as such) where the core of the neoliberal mode of thinking lies. If the neoliberal mode of thinking assumes that the world without the law or rules will lead to people killing each other, and once this idea is normalized within society especially that it is mostly the only way in which societies are organized, therefore protection for human beings from each other would be an idea that is comforting and provides safety to people. Whether there is an evil nature of human beings or not is not within the scope of this thesis, but the idea behind mentioning this

specific point is to disentangle one of the reasons the idea of the law is normalized and accepted within society. The protection that laws pretend to provide to people and the way the law supposedly gives justice to people justifies the desire for it.

Who are "we"? And how is our social imagination constructed?

Here I would like to go back to the end of chapter three where one of my interlocutors asked who are we, a question that kept resonating in my mind for a while. Is there a "we" in general? Are we one entity? Or are we a multiplicity of entities each within one's self that engage with the outside worlds and then become similar in ideology as a result of the types of oppression that every individual faces in the everyday. Is there a becoming a singular homogenous entity? Understanding the everydayness of oppression becomes crucial in understanding the base of what brings different people together under the umbrella of ideological practices such as feminists from *Nasawiya*. After all, when it comes to the violence of the everyday it can eventually become a matter of life or death. Moreover, and regardless of death, it's the quality of life that is defined by the everyday that matters.

Of course in a nutshell the answer is no we are not one. But the image is far more complex than a mathematical equation that can be solved by an answer, even though sometimes the neoliberal mode of thinking is fond of problem solutions quick answers, if one shifts their mode of thinking from questioning what are people, to realizing that people are a process of constant becoming, then the complexity of the image gets unpacked. Who are we? Most of us might be political actors. The feminist collective in Beirut is perceived to the social as a group of people who are actively engaged in

lobbying for women rights, but then again what is beyond that is that the "we". What do "we" as a feminist collective have in common might be what Taylor calls a social imaginary. "The social imaginary is that common understanding that makes possible common practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy "(Taylor, 2002, p.106). Through his explanation of what social imaginary is, Taylor argues that the sphere of politics whether through the media, or through any other social discourse of interaction among people is curbed and simultaneously produced by a set of theories that became constitutes how we imagine our society to be. The common understanding in the Lebanese feminist collective, the understanding of the importance of resisting the injustice of the everyday. These practices eventually become legitimate through a group of people practicing them. What is problematic here in this relationship of power and resistance to power between the Lebanese state and the feminist collective that does not exist in vacuum. I contend that the way the mobilization for resistance is contained within a certain social imagination that views the passing of laws as the only guarantee for women's equality and crucial for emancipation.

In this section, I try to analyze how a feminist collective with subversive politics as I elaborated in the introduction and in chapter three via interviews with my interlocutors, came to take on lobbying for a law to protect women from domestic violence. Going back to Taylor, he argues that "The arrangement of functions that it exhibits is not simply contingent, it is "normal" and right. That the feet are below the head is how it should be." (Taylor, 2002, p.96). If law is the arrangement of function of society then its normalization as a tool of justice and achieving equality is so normal that it is left unquestioned in the way people resist, that it became a given. The law becomes common

sensical, the organizer of society as much as the feet are below the head.

Taylor continues that the way our social imagination is constructed is not arbitrary, neither is it historically contingent, but specific and based on an imagination that leads to theorization. Within an historical analysis Taylor discusses how "A strong economy eventually came to be seen as the collective goal of society" (Taylor, 2002, p.102). Even though one might doubt the link between the strong economy and the law, a marriage of Marx's capitalist mode of production to Taylor's social imagination and Althusser can lead to an understanding of how the law is directly related to the production of a healthy economy. Moreover how the law sustains and reproduces this healthy economy.

The need for the law as Taylor argues came from a need to organize society in order to keep the mode of production of society as one that increases the gaps between the ruling class and the working class (Taylor, 2002). The law to put it bluntly was created in order to regulate the outlaws that are the poor, in order not to revolt against the rich, to organize property and keep the power hierarchies in society as ones that function on the bases of misdistribution of recourses.

In the case of the Lebanese feminist collective *Nasawiya* and NGOs represented in this research as *Kafa* lobbying for the law, what lies behind the lobbying for the law is not only that it became normalized within the collective social imagination. This is comprehended by the politics of concealment of the power relations that takes place in the process of producing and applying the law. Law is about govermentality, a mobile body of legislations that domesticate its subjects as it moves. The law also is about securization and walling for the protection of the borders of the nation states (Aradau, 2008), thus appearing as protection for the good of the people.

In order to understand the very subtle links between the economy, regulations, governmentality and securization one needs to look at the politics of producing and reproducing the social imagination that normalizes the law as the solution for the ills of society. People and states are historically produced as a sphere that is circumscribed by politics of visibility and concealment. Althusser argues "what classical political economy does not see, is not what it does not see, it is what it sees; it is not what it lacks, on the contrary, it is what it does not lack; it is not what it misses, on the contrary, it is what it does not miss. The oversight, then, is not to see what one sees, the oversight no longer concerns the object, but the sight itself (Althusser, 1970, p.21). The latter discusses the politics of concealment in the socio-economical power relations that take place in political economy. It is not about what is visible to the eye or to the mind. It is more about the relationships of power, the hierarchies of injustice, and the binaries that are concealed within the production of political economy. It is similar to the example of Marx when the author engages in a talk about commodities that are being sold, where when you see a product on the shelf of a super market, you don't see the labor time spent in building it, neither do you see the power relations of exploitation of labor that goes into it. You do not see the overtime, the tiredness, the emotions, abuse and labor time that went into producing a simple supermarket purchased product every day. The same analogy can be applied to the law; the law in that sense I argue can be perceived as a commodity that is consumed by the public on daily basis, admired, respected, normalized, and consumed as a giving good within the social imagination. Most importantly, desired because of the politics of concealment that goes into it. The power relations that go into applying and producing the law are always hidden; what is projected

to the surface as visible to the public when talking about the law of domestic violence and any other law under the sun is their ability to protect and organize society.

It is common knowledge that every time someone argues that someone should consider that laws might be bad for society, among a group of three people, one of them is always ready to question your law critique by asking you: do you want society to break down? Do you want people to eat each other? And that is exactly how law sustains itself, through a mode of crisis that is represented as an exception, while, mostly it is the rule. Agamben in that sense states it clearly, "The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the 'state of emergency' in which we live is not the exception but the rule." (Agamben, 1996 p.152,3). He proceeds to argue "How could we not think that a system that can no longer function at all but on the basis of emergency would not also be interested in preserving such an emergency at any price?" (Agamben, 1996 p.152,3). Therefore, the state of emergency that is presented as an exception has become the normal state of being. The Lebanese system feeds on the state of emergency in order for it to not only preserve its power of ruling through the law, thus practicing it's control and domesticating the subjects of society. But also, in order to preserve its ruling class that always distracts the masses with this state of emergency that legitimize its existence. An example of how the ruling class distract the masses is by putting them under the threat of a potential upcoming civil war every time a clash or an incident happens. For example the word "wehde wataniya" (national unity) is included in every speech that any politician, minister, party leader gives after an explosion. The term national unity that need to be protected, even though over used by politicians and emptied of its content, works as a reminder of its contrary, the non national unity that eventually lead to war before. The

politicians do not necessarily have to clearly state to the people that if they do not preserve the so called national unity the war will break out, they only have to hint towards it, thus preserving the anxiety and the feeling of the state of emergency. If the state of emergency, which feeds on the existence of crisis disappears, the ruling class that needs to rule, would seize to exist. Consequently, the ruling class derives its power of ruling, through imposing the law as order, in order to preserve society from the fear of chaos and the unknown. Order, security and organization of the social become valid in opposition of the very feared of the know and unknown. The inexperienced or the formerly experienced .

On the other hand, the relationships of power that are concealed in the constant production of laws are what legitimize its existence to the masses. The masses are not stupid; neither do they have an inherent need or desire for laws, governmentality and regulations. The masses take what is presented as a solution to violence. For example, when you go to a shop to buy a shirt that is produced in a sweatshop, what you buy, what is visible to you is the product itself. What is concealed is the exploitation of workers that went into producing the shirt, and the economical social power relations that took place economically and socially for a person to desperately need a job so much so that they work in a sweatshop. Moreover the process of shipping it to your geographical location, what politics go into that, what geographies of power apply?

Similarly, when the law is constantly produced as the social regulator of human nature's (as if there anything as such) inherent evil, what is concealed is how laws historically came to being in order to regulate property and constitute an economy. and how it institutionalized class hierarchies and sectarianism in the case of Lebanon. The

constant reproduction of the need for law by lobbying for it, is legitimizing the existence of the law, thus empowering and solidifying the police states.

Production of politics of desire and affect.

Conversations with most of my interlocutors revealed an immense desire for the law regardless of the politics of concealment that takes place in the constant reproduction of the law as the solution to the problem of violence against women. But in order to understand the complexity of building a social imagination that endorses the law as the solution against domestic violence, one needs to unpack first the complexity of desire and how it is produced.

Deleuze argues that all we talk about are multiplicities, lines, strata and segmentarities" (Deleuze and Guatari, 1987, p.27). There are multiple of ways in which change is imagined, nothing is singular, there is no one single process, there are multiple processes that take place at the same time, some happen at the same time in parallel, other processes intersect, but what is important to understand is that this chapter does not pretend that there are no other processes or mobilizations for change that are happening. What I try to capture here is how change is imagined and how is it absorbed by the neoliberal practices via state and the human rights language and discourse. In this chapter I explore how a process of emancipation is embodied in a desire for laws. And how laws in this specific neoliberal moment of history became a commodity in which they include a value in them?

Marx argues value has to meet a need and a desire otherwise it's loose its essence of value within the capitalist mode of production (Marx, 1982). The neoliberal mode of

thinking shapes laws as desired objectified values that are needed in order to solve a problem. The problem solution in this thesis is the law against domestic violence against women, which is perceived as the solution to violence against women. On the other hand the crisis of violence is produced by the same neoliberal system in which state have control over human lives thus one that allows violence against them, especially women. Moreover the state, along with the people, produce this need and desire out of crisis by shaping the modes of thinking of the need for state, especially once the power relations that goes into the law is concealed. States create the economic, social, and discursive situations in which violence against women is possible. Therefore the desire of the law becomes a tool in the hand of state in order to not only practice it's securization for protection of the people, thus policing, regulating and controlling the masses. These processes also absorb the mobilization of feminist collectives such as *Nasawiya* via producing the law as an object of desire, that eventually feeds into reproducing the same power hierarchies of control and multi leveled modes of oppression.

In order to unpack this argument there's a need to understand first what is a commodity? Moreover to be clear, there's a need to understand that the law is not an object by itself, it is more of a regulatory apparatus that becomes a desired object, but not an object by itself.

Marx argues that a commodity appears as a simple economical transaction. It is a thing that meets a human want or need, a bearer of something but not something by itself (Marx, 1982). It is a bearer of exchange value that is a representation of human labor. Therefore the law becomes a commodity through human labor on multiple frontiers. The first frontier is the state. It constantly labors for the production of the law. The second

frontier labors to achieve the passing of a law that is desired. Here I would like to draw on the difference of these types of labors. The state in this case in Marxist language becomes the capitalist that produce the need for the law. Capitalism in that sense is based on producing a need in order for certain targeted consumers to consume it, so that capitalism sustain itself, and legitimize its existence. If people stopped perceiving the law as the savior, the problem solving magical solution for injustice and the power pole that balances hierarchies, the state that is the perpetuator of violence will seize to exist. I reiterate a point I made earlier: the state legitimizes its existence by the need of order, security and organization. And that is exactly how the state tries to absorb resistance against it, by producing the law as a desired object, as a solution, not only via its local actors, but also through a gender governance narrative that got eventually adopted by various NGOs and feminist collectives through the process of NGOization of movements. According to Jana, who is writing a thesis about the history of Lebanese women movement, the RDFL collective, the umbrella of most women's NGOs in Lebanon , emerged from a militant group that was part of the communist party during the civil war. The feminist politics that this group took and identified with lead them to breaking away from the communist party because they fought with the men in the group over their feminist agenda. The process of NGOization of militancy regardless of its sectarian nature in the Lebanese context is part of what is called "a moment of capitalist accumulation profoundly marked by gender" (Keating, Rasmussen, and Rishi, 2010, p154). This process does not only function within the axes of the economy, but in order to alternate the economy and achieve the constant molding of capitalism that is based on economic inequalities, and neoliberalism that is based on securization, police state and

control over people, where both intersect and are in dialectical relationship with each other in order to maintain each other. The capitalist mode of accumulation needs to alternate the existing social structures that enables such process of accumulation to happen. Women in Lebanon before the NGOization process by human rights institutions that took place in the Arab world according to Jad have a long history of militancy. Warda Ibrahim for example is one of the martyrs that died while fighting for labor rights in 1964, in a confrontation with the tobacco industry in Lebanon (Kaebay, 2014).

Post-civil war Lebanon witnessed a pacifist wave of dealing with social issues. The women movements that were militant during the civil war were domesticated in their approach by turning into NGOs that provide services and lobby for laws as a strategy to achieving social justice. Movement became reformists rather than militant. The problematic of these NGOs is not the lack of their militancy per say but their ability and acceptance to work within confessional structures, thus normalizing and reproducing the sectarian system in Lebanon. Movements of women in Lebanon did not only get limited to feminist agendas during and post-civil war. For example the movement of women that investigated the disappeared during the civil war, was primarily composed of women. The NGOization of women movements has translated into international support and funding. By providing funding for these groups according to their agendas that normalize with cultural differences and the confessional structures, these funds helped maintain this system unchallenged (Khatab, 2010). Funding of NGOs according to my interlocutor Hala an experienced NGO person, influences the way these NGOs work. Hala points out that funding and competition surrounding funding between women NGOs tends to widen the divide between those NGOs instead of building a network of solidarity in their fight

against injustices (Hala, January 2014). The NGOization of militant women movements is part of this global agenda of gender governance that managed to curb and absorb movements of resistance such as feminists' movements and women rights groups, leaving countries such as Lebanon with mostly women's rights NGOs that provide services.

On the other hand, there's another type of labor that is invested in this lobbying for laws by the feminist collective, especially by a *Nasawiya* who defines itself by a set of ideologies that conflict with the desire for the law. The law here becomes a commodity that is a bearer of affect human labor that includes a lot of intense emotional labor along with immaterial labor. According to Rodriguez (2010, p.5) "Affects are not just perceived as emotions and feelings, but as intensities, sensations and bodily reactions disturbing, but also stretching and reaffirming, power relations." Affect, she continues, drives us to act by transforming emotions into actions. (ibid) The sets of emotions that are attached to lobbying for the law that is the bearer of the labor of emotions that is in a constant relationship of power with the state, is one of the forces that pushes the feminist movements to lobby for the law.

I find it important here to reflect on an event that took place during my engagement in the feminist collective in order to elaborate on how actors involved in the feminist collective through lobbying for the law are engaged in affective labor. In 2012, the government was again delaying acting on the domestic violence law legislation, procrastinating in studying it, passing it, and complicating its process by distorting it. A call for a meeting in *Nasawiya* was announced on the mailing list and the meeting was about thinking of ways in order to push the government to pass the law. Back then I was heavily involved in lobbying for the law. Along with other colleagues I was critical of the

government, slightly critical of the law as a mode of governance but at the same time I was supportive of its passing. In anticipation of a long awaited victory, many people showed up to that meeting, where consequently the collective ended up organizing a march on International Women's Day. We decided that this year the collective will not celebrate the day but mourn. *Nasawiya* members along with other members from *Kafa* and other NGOs took the streets carrying a tomb on their shoulders, wearing black and holding white roses as a gesture of mourning all the women who died from domestic violence. The meeting I mentioned lead to another meeting where a group of us decided to take a radical step: a hunger strike in front of the parliament. A group of the collective took various tasks in order to plot for the hunger strike and working out logistics for our strike tent. We decided on an open protest until the law is passed, without the distortion that the committee studying it added. Eventually, for various political clashes among the collective and conflicting opinions, the hunger strike did not materialize. Although the hunger strike did not take place, what is important here is to look at the proposal and the strategic planning that took place for it by itself. Hunger strikes were and have been a feminist strategy historically in order to pressure governments into complying with various feminist agendas. Back then we thought: you want dying women, since you are not passing the law that will protect women from domestic violence, we will give you dying women. We will go on a hunger strike and if it takes death to pass this law, then death is what you get. It was an extremely emotional moment, a moment of both desperation and hope. Back then the idea of death sounded like the perfect way out of desperation and back into the power of controlling the situation of non-ending violence. Those of us who decided to engage in the hunger strike were scared, worried and

anxious. Much emotional labor was invested in this decision. The intensity of putting your body on food deprivation in order to pressure the government into passing a law that is represented as one that will give justice to women that are being abused and violated everyday by their husbands made perfect sense. The political entangled with the emotional, with the affect of laboring your body to the extent of death, is what I mean by the law as a commodity carrying inside it affect labor.

In another event, months later, another call for an urgent act was called, but this time from *Kafa*. A meeting was called in order to organize a die in. What is a die in? A die in as we planned it was a non-violent direct action whereby a group of people, mostly women would drop dead in front of the parliament as a symbolic act that represented the death of women. Again the idea was the same: you want dying women by not passing this law; we will give you dying women. The direct action was very discreetly planned since it took place in front of the parliament. Usually any type of action, whether protest or any type of political gathering is not allowed inside the downtown clock area where the parliament meetings take place in front of parliament. The area on that day was highly charged with state security. It took a lot of time to plan how to infiltrate the security system as a group without being noticed. Each group of around ten people went to a different entrance, met in the middle of the downtown square in front of the parliament where two street theater actors started the scene by a man slapping his wife, and then the moment she fell, was the cue for all the activists that were there to fall with her. The result was media photos of dead women in front of the parliament that resonated to the extent that every protest that came after the sit in in front of the parliament received a very violent reaction from the police. The result of such actions is not necessarily the

most important aspect of them; their importance lies in the laboring of emotions that takes place in the process of performing such acts. In these two events I tried to portray how vital passing the law was for the feminist collective and *Kafa* and how they collaborated together and engaged in affective labor in order to lobby for it. These two events show how desired the law is and how activists would literally 'die to pass it'. This sense of desperation does not come from nowhere; its base is violence.

In Beirut, the violence that is inflicted on women seems endless. I reiterate here what I tackled in chapter two, that violence is something that varies from one person to another and is not something that can be spoken of objectively. In order to be specific I will resort back to chapter three, where I described the violence that result from domestic violence, that mostly end up in death. Death is not the only thing that matters but the everyday of a person who is living under this type of violence is equally important. Death has some kind of power in triggering certain awareness about domestic violence, which is problematic by itself. Do women need to keep dying in order for something to change? This is always a question. The death of women that results from domestic violence put the feminist collective and women right groups in a state of desperation. The more vulnerability of women that is produced by a narrative of protection by state, the more the desire for a law is guaranteed. In his discussion of commodities Marx argues that they are a thing that meets a human need or want. The law, I contend, needs to meet a need in order for the people to lobby for it, there needs to be a crisis with a solution that is represented as the law. Thus comes the desire for the law that I elaborate on through my ethnographic fieldwork with my interlocutors and their contradictory desire for the law.

The Politics of Desiring the Law

Foucault (1985, p. 43) argues that the underlying incentive behind desire is pleasure; any act performed by desire should result in a climax of pleasure. Pleasure is the engine that fuels desire; in the case of the feminist movement in Beirut the pleasure of passing a law is embodied in winning over the state in multiple ways. The pleasure of winning over the state does not exist in a vacuum. The pleasure of passing a law is deeper, as I elaborated earlier domestic violence is a matter of life or death, and a matter of the way one lives one's life, a life that is ruptured everyday by an immense degree of violence inflicted mostly by a husband against his wife, or father against his children and wife. As I argued in chapter one, forcing the state through it's actors, whether the parliament members or the committee studying the domestic violence law, to admit that domestic violence is violence against women and that it should not be tolerated. Second, domestic violence should be refused (refusal here is represented as criminalized). Third, winning a battle against the state by pressuring the government through various tools of mobilization – whether through protests, advertisement campaigns or constant speaking about the issue – means passing the law which has been proposed since more than seven years.

The complexity and suffering and years of lobbying for the law does not only symbolize the corruption, violence, sexism and corruption of state, also makes visible the propaganda in which the law is produced as an object of desire.

> It's important to see the *Kafa* violence against women
> law passing. This is one of the few times in Lebanon
> when we get to see a law pass, even though it is not
> exactly the same as the women's movement had hope
> it would be. We are going to have to wait a bit
> and see what will happen" (Layla, January 2014).

Layla stresses on the importance and the unusual event of viewing the law passing, she also argues that it is important to see it pass even though it is not what the women's movement wanted. Here she is hinting to the fact that the committee studying the law against domestic violence has distorted the law on various levels, adding and subtracting words and materials that empty the law of its content. For example the part of the law that tackles the Shari'a courts, where the committee refused to allow women divorce through civil courts, which was one of the most important parts of the law. This following statement can be analyzed in two parts, first the impossibility of the law passing makes the feminist movement view the law as a farfetched goal that is very complicated to reach, therefore the pleasure of reaching it appears as the aim. That aim leading the mobilization centered around the law, and the complicated dynamics behind not believing in the law but desiring it. Second when Lyla mentions that it is nice to view the law pass despite the fact that it was distorted indicates how regulation of desire works within good and bad subjects of power.

Foucault (1985, p.70) argues about desire that the "The moderate individual is not one who has no desires but one who desires "only to a moderate degree, not more than he should, nor when he should not." The good subject of power, the individual whether intentionally or not, is curbed by a system that represents virtue through a moderate desire. The desiring subject should not be greedy within the relationship of power with the state, otherwise the desiring subject becomes a danger to state, an outlaw that is a threat to the state's well-being, people and sovereignty. The moderate desire is one that does not want to topple down the state, a moderate desire is one that agrees to desire what

gender governance and the state wants it to believe that it is the solution for domestic violence which is the law. Therefore, when any type of actors or activist that transgress the mobilization within the law, are perceived as an outlaw by state, and also by the women rights groups. Thus leaving such collectives to stand on their own in the face of a these power hierarchies.

People do have desires, but one needs to ask what are the class dynamics involved in desire? Is the language of human rights, if assumed as the language of the privileged, accessible to anyone other than the middle class? In the interviews, some of my interlocutors hinted towards the complexity of the lower class/working class to the materialization of this desire via a discussion of what type of language and privilege you need to have in order to have access to acting on your desires when it comes to human rights work.

> Even in grassroots movements, people mostly become leaders of the movements because they have access to the grassroots.? Especially in Beirut they have to have a certain profile, the profile for example entail their ability to speak English, know the language of the donors and the funders and know how to deal with them. This language is very specialized and people who are even from a college graduate level do not have access to it since it is similar to the academic language (Manal, December 2013).

Manal brought up this argument when I asked her if she identifies as a feminist or a human rights activist, she frowned at the idea of human rights activism. Her observation is quite interesting in understanding the way in which human rights activism works. In her answer she touched on the link between human rights activism and the way the feminist movement in Lebanon functions. Even within grass roots movements which the feminist collective *Nasawiya* claims to be, the person in power is the one that can speak

to the funders in English in order to get funds. Speaking the language of human rights entails certain set of synonyms and antonyms such as capacity building, empowerment and development. Now the important point to think through via this statement is the access of the non English speaking, non human rights speaking class to funding. This class might not be uneducated but specifically have less privilege and access. Foucualt (1972, p. 210) argues that "The identifiable form of the court of law belongs to the bourgeois ideology of justice." The law as a hegemonic concept is based on regulating the lower class and protecting the property of the upper class, therefore what happened via the gender governance agenda is a proliferation of the law. Activism in order to balance out certain types of power hierarchies that produce violence against women is swallowed by an agenda that protects state and the upper class by lobbying for the law, instead of actually forming a power sphere that addresses the base of these inequalities, the production of this desire, and the root of injustice that is perpetuated by state. The elite, who know the language of human rights and know how to speak to funders in this language gets the funds and through this, gain access to leadership. This process leads the leadership who have access to this language to lead movements and inflict on them this language. Consequently, what happens in these relationships of power between the grass roots subjects and their leaders (no matter how much structure-less a movement pretend to be) is that those who have access to the human rights language, the ones that can guarantee access to a fund become the ones who define the discursive way in which the mobilization of this movement takes place. When the bourgeois (here identified as the English speaking, human rights speaking person) is curbed within the human rights language and discourse the whole movement gets curbed into it as well. The latter does

not mean that on an individual basis there are no resistant subjects to this language or to the bourgeois discourse, and this analysis does not intent to take agency away from the activists and actors in such movements. It has been already established in chapter three that the human rights discourses and mobilizations are based on acts that negotiate power with state in a way that reproduce state power by legitimizing state. Indeed this analysis leads to questioning not only leadership of movements, language, and ways and tools of mobilization but as well the formation of desire.

Brown (1993) in a critique of Foucault argues ""My quarrel here is not with Foucault's valuable insistence on freedom as a practice but with his distinct lack of attention to what might constitute, negate, or redirect the desire for freedom" (ibid, p.398). If freedom is a desire, whether freedom of violence or any other kind of oppression, then this desire does not exist in a vacuum away from the dialectical power that runs the world. Moreover, desires of the feminist collective cannot be detached, especially in this historical moment, from the way emancipation is being portrayed by human rights legislations and treaties via the gender governance discourse as a stagnant aim that cannot move beyond laws that claim to achieve gender equality. Brown (ibid, p. 398) notes further that "It is not a question about when or where the practice of freedom is possible but a question about the direction of the will to power, a will that potentially, but only potentially, animates a desire for freedom. The will of power in most of my interviews was directed towards the achievement of the law, and then contradicted by knowledge that alone it will not solve anything.

> Maya: Why do you believe in the law?
> Nivine: I don't know. I think it's the bases of a
> civil society, we have a problem, that's how a society
> work, by law, Laws can work in favor of society and we

> need a culture of non-corruption. The law is not alone enough;
> you need a culture of respecting the law. Do you think the law
> will stop a man from beating his wife? If there's no punishment
> and accountability there's a problem. Eventually yes, the law
> will, to begin with, no. (Nivine, January 2014).

Nivine's reflections illustrate how the politics of concealment in the power relations that produce and reproduce the law is visible, how the desire of the law is not grounded in a solid ideology but the " I don't know." An analysis of the word I don't know here is crucial. We simply do not know, because the origin of why the law was created is lost in a time and space, ahistorized and so normalized that it became a tool of curbing people's social imagination, law hence can be deployed through various actors of global governance through programs of gender governance that sustains it.

Spaces for subversion

Even though Taylor describes how our imagination is curbed within a system that frames it and tames it, interviews with some of my interlocutors revealed that within the feminist collective imagination of emancipation there's always a room for subversion. For example Souad, who joined the collective most recently about a year ago, narrated to me during her interview how after being involved in the collective for a short time she realized that there is something deeply dysfunctional in the way things are done. She talked about how she thought in the beginning that change can happen within the system, but afterwards how she started realizing that this tactic is just a reproduction of what has been done before, therefore reproducing the failure to actually balance the power hierarchies that produce various types of oppression. Souad noted that political movements in Lebanon are always reactionary to crisis.

It is always crisis that we are trying to solve to the extent
that we never have the time to sit back and rethink what
we are doing. Our work is always reactionary, never
thought through to the future" (Souad, January 2012).

Agamben as quoted earlier states that states are based on a constant production of
crisis, similarly Zizek obsrves that the problem with the left that it is one that is lost in
illusions of reform instead of actually confronting the system with a mentality of thinking
and imagining change outside the system. Souad's interview is a great indicator that even
though most people's imagination, whether activist or not, think of reform, there's always
space for rethinking these tactics. These spaces do not form out of nowhere, they are
always in a constant movement of trial and error. It is the precious moment of reflection
and self critique though that defines who give themselves spaces to pause and think.

Moreover Souad's take on the passing the domestic violence law was very
enlightening. By the time I interviewed her, the law was passed from the committee that
was studying it, distorted and emptied from its content as I mentioned before. Back then
she was as well very critical of the law. When I asked her what she thinks of the domestic
violence law she stated:

If we passed the law against domestic violence,
it will not change anything, people do not understand
 why I was so pissed off when the law passed from the
 committee, it is just a way to shut people up so they
stop being angry and we need people to stay angry.
I think we need to drop the idea of state and start
taking matters in our own hands. I think people
should take matters in their own hands. It's not
only about talking to provide solutions, we
need to talk to people, we should work
together to create solutions, we need community
work in order to build trust in a movement.
I don't want to save people; we need to fix the
power dynamics here. (Saoud, January 2013).

When I asked her of what she thinks of the UN work she again stated:

> The last things that UN do is empower people,
> they make people dependent on them to feel secure,
> and that's not empowering people, that's
> creating another type of dependency. The UN tactic is
> as follows "I'll feed you, without me you die,
> but here here, I am empowering you"

Souad's interview made me realize that interaction on daily basis with various modes of power dynamics do not always tame people, it also gives space to rebel. Passing the desired law in order to what she phrases as "shut people up and stop making them angry" portrays perfectly what I have tried to argue through all this chapter, if not through out this thesis. This neoliberal tactic that keeps trying to absorb movements, feminist collectives and any type of resistance have an anesthesia effect on people, representing reform as the perfect solution, yet again reproducing the same system of oppression. But as Foucault states, wherever there's oppression, there's resistance.

In this chapter I tried to elaborate how our social imagination have been curbed through state and gender governance in order to view the law as problem solving tool for the ills of this world, the injustices of domestic violence in specific. It is all about perception of things; people might perceive things similarly or differently. Color theory states that there are three primary colors but at the same time, every color we see around is a mixture of various colors in order for the color to reflect what an object cannot absorb. For example most of the people look at a green leaf and what they see is what is perceived as a fact: the color of a lead is green. But at the same time, color theory states that a green leaf is not only green, it is actually a mix of colors, but the only color that the leaf could not absorb is the green color which is the one that gets reflected to our eyes,

and then we perceive our vision of it as green. The politics of the power relations in the law are similar. There is one thing that is reflected and represented as a solution via various apparatuses of governance, whether self governance or state governance. Therefore, it is no wonder the law becomes a desire for those in distress and desperation. It is represented as the solution of crisis. This analysis does not mean to deprive hope from reading the present; it is actually the exact contrary. It is moments of realizations and consciousness that things are not exactly what they appear visible to our eyes and minds that make one engage in an endeavor to analyze them further and think through them, which leads to becoming critical. I elaborated on how the law becomes a commodity that is a barer of affect human labor, how the law is produced as an object of desire, in order to more fully understand why people lobby for laws. The singer Ani Difranco in lyrics from her song "My country Tis of Thee" states "why don't you just go ahead turn off the sun, because you'll never live long enough to, undo everything they've done to you". If our social imagination is curbed within the system that produces violence against us and then solidified through a neoliberal system that proliferates the law as a solution, thus leaving more space for securization, how can we escape this problem /solution dichotomy, how can we think not in solutions but in questions? How else can we view the world as a sphere of circumscribed politics without solidifying the problem as a stagnant knot? How else can we understand that the world, Lebanon, that is in a constant process of becoming, and push ourselves to the edge in order to be able to imagine? Imagination and processes of becoming and a discussion of imagining emancipation are at the core of chapter five.

Chapter 5

Taking You for a Walk in an Emancipated Beirut

*It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is **essential** is invisible to the **eye**"-*

(The Little Prince)

Introduction.

In this concluding chapter, I unpack the imagination of my interlocutors by asking them to imagine a walk in an emancipated Beirut. The value of this chapter does not lie in the analysis of the statements made in the interviews. It aims towards a broader illustration of the everyday in Beirut, and the lives of women in it. Questions of how they maneuver public space and how they engage politically in larger questions about neoliberalism within themselves is the goal behind asking the interlocutors to imagine an emancipated Beirut. There is no one question in this chapter, there are multiple, but the most important one is to question how do we question. I argue that there are no answers at this moment of history; the answer lies in questioning our own mode of thinking and its deployment in our modes of living.

Why Imagination.

As I begin to write this chapter, I find it crucial to begin by reflecting why among all the topics I could've tackled in my final chapter, I chose to stress on imagining emancipation. This chapter is an attempt to question what happens when the imagination of collectives and individuals within the collectives that are working within a neoliberal agenda are deeply disturbed by the consequences of neoliberalism, which mostly

manifests in their imaginations through their discomfort with capitalism and sectarianism in Lebanon. Moreover, it is an attempt to question what can possibly limit a political imagination, an imagination in general, since it's the product of one's own thoughts, one that belongs to people themselves. An idealized perception of what constitutes imagination is that it is not under surveillance, not watched and not subjected to any judgments from the outer world. Things imagined are thoughts that are inside one's head, supposedly they do not come out unless a person is asked to imagine or willingly share their imagination and thoughts. Even though this perception of imagination is idealized, this opens a space to question how much rooted this neoliberal mode of thinking have become to the extent that even our imagination is saturated with it. As Savater (2014) argues neoliberalism does not impose itself in a coercive way only, but it becomes a mode of living, a lens in which we perceive the world around us. Therefore as a counter strategy in this chapter I use imagination, as a lens in which I question the structures that construct subjectivities by a system of oppression that either prohibits or absorbs imagination. I aim in this chapter towards an analysis and an understanding of the imagination of the interlocutors I interviewed throughout my thesis and my fieldwork in Beirut. It must be noted that most of the things quoted in the interviews are self-explanatory. In my analysis of them, I try to give the reader a deeper contextualization of Lebanon, to facilitate the understanding of those imaginations. Furthermore, I highlight issues that hint towards an intense level of discomfort in living within an age of heightening of capitalism in Lebanon as will be elaborated later in this chapter.

To Think in Questions

You can try this at home, in a coffee shop, in a collective, in a private conversation over tea or in a collective debate. Mostly whenever you get to the conclusion in an argument that the process of emancipation has become impossible within the current way the system of oppression we live under functions – under capitalism and neoliberalism – the first question that is asked would be: okay so what do you suggest as an alternative? Here I would like to revisit Harvey's (2007) observation that "neoliberalism has become a mode of thinking" to the extent that it became inscribed in the way we think of emancipation. The way we think has become bound to answers instead of questions. The latter assumes that the way oppression is structured, especially that of women is static, thus freezing it in a timeless spatial sphere. By this act of freezing, the hegemonic knot becomes so large that it gets too big to tackle on a small daily life scale, while it is entrenched and condensed in the daily life practices. It becomes a scary knot that sits on one's chest and results in the suffocation that thinks of finding a quick answers and quick solutions as a fresh breathe of oxygen. But if one looks at the everyday, it's noticeable that it is in constant flux, changing every second, molding to accommodate this change or resisting it. Therefore, this mode of thinking that stagnates the way we view things is becoming more and more blinded by finding the solution to this crisis, still limited by assuming that crisis is the exception to our daily life, while as argued before it is the rule. At this stage of history, it can be assumed that in order to untie this knot that sits so heavily on our chests, we might want to first begin by understanding it, and that would only happen the moment we start questioning it while we understand as well that it is constantly in motion and a simple – or complicated – problem solving act will not untie the knot.

The answer lies not in the answer itself, because at this moment of history there are no answers, the process of emancipation lies in the pause, the pause to stop and think, and rethink everything, whether the small details of the everyday or the big ideological traps that indulges us with frustration. Imagine oppression as a big multifunctional machine, that keeps producing injustice every second of the day, but being the smart machine it is, from time to time it produces as well what looks like liberation, and having a stagnant mode of thinking combined with the desperation as a result of constant crisis perceive these little liberation moments as one that should increase. Thus one keeps studying how to increase these moments of liberation. But once we understand that this machine functions in binaries, that will mostly produce more oppression and liberation together we won't be able to stop it. To pause and question is similar to putting a screwdriver in the machine's engine to stop it.

I resort to Foucault (1969, p.24) in this chapter as he argues "We must question those ready-made syntheses, those groupings that we normally accept before any examination, those links whose validity is recognized from the outset; we must oust those forms and obscure forces by which we usually link the discourse of one man with that of another; they must be driven out from the darkness in which they reign." This quote hints towards the obscurity of what produces the present, the dark forces as Foucault mentions that produces a certain discourse around – in my research's case – women rights. As I elaborated in my previous chapters, I questioned the law as a pre-imposed body that is assumed as emancipatory for women. I tried in my introduction to question the category of the Lebanese women and tried to elaborate on how it is produced via state, human rights discourses and reproduce them via lobbying by the feminist collective and women

rights NGOs. I reiterate my point about questioning; the answer lays in the question, in order to move the analysis about women collectives from stagnant water to clear ones in order to understand the various discourses that produce them.

It is to be admitted that the results in this research are rather frustrating. It is the realization that by "Simply desiring egalitarian relationships does not make them so" (Sitrin, 2006, p.4). It is very visible that the desire of emancipation within the Lebanese feminist collectives and women rights groups is very strong. Yet again the ways in which emancipation is perceived vary, moreover it is limited by desiring laws. Through this awareness, one can question and detangle what are egalitarian relationships and how are they produced and perceived. The feminist collective and the women rights NGOs in Lebanon desire egalitarian relationships very intensely but at the same time, this desire is curbed by neoliberalism in believing in the law, thus the "does not make them so". To be critical enough to realize the limitation of the law as a body that can emancipate women might not be the most pleasant realization, but it is indeed a step, or more a trial to suggest moving forward away from the law and the Lebanese state in order to imagine other possibilities for emancipation.

Answers from my interlocutors to my question of imagining an emancipated Beirut sound like little ruptures in the narrative of this research. The contradiction between their answers that I elaborate on later in this chapter and the way they work within neoliberal gender governance agenda is an indication of the rupture itself. The rupture that is induced every time someone asks you to pause, think, and imagine.

To propose imagining new ways of thinking about emancipation is not a suggestion of an answer, it is more as I mentioned before a realization that our

relationships are embedded in power dynamics that form the way we perceive the world. "Our relationships are deeply affected by the power dynamics of capitalism and hierarchy, which operate in our collective and creative spaces, especially in how we relate to one another in terms of economic resources, gender, race, access to information and experience. We see this arise often in our meetings, assemblies, activities, and actions" (Sitrin, 2006, p.3). Indeed these relationships surface through out all this research, it is visible in the way the collective is structured and how it functions, in how the desire of a law to emancipate is always taken for granted instead of questioned. In imagination I suggest that we start thinking in questions rather than answers, a process that is not out of my own imagination, that is not new to collective mobilization but one that became popular in Latin America. Horizontalism is the name of the new movements that take into consideration the power hierarchies that form these movements and curb the social imagination and challenge them merely by existing.

It is like a breath of fresh air, of the long awaited oxygen dose to know that there are movements in the world that think in questions rather than answer. That does not view freedom and liberation as a static body but as a process of becoming, thus working constantly on aspiring and imagining. One, which does not aspire control for the sake of order, and does not legitimize the existence of state under the illusion of protection. Moreover working on deploying these imaginations within the everyday; "movements, that are creating the future in their present social relationships (Sitrin, 2006, p.4). One can argue for centuries about emancipation, but it can mostly manifest in the small acts that structure the present in an egalitarian way that builds and leads to the process of an emancipated future.

A walk through Beirut

Before I start engaging with the literature about imaging an emancipated Beirut and a walk through an emancipated Beirut, it is crucial here to note that most of my interlocutors – regardless of how they imagined Beirut – had one dream in common: to talk a walk in Beirut without being sexually harassed. Most of them imagined friendlier streets that are less hostile. Ecobart argues that women's bodies are the first cite where politics take place. Thus this constant technique of pushing women out of the public into the private highlights that regardless of how much Beirut is perceived as a city that is women friendly, it denies them the simple joy of taking a walk in the public without being sexually harassed.

The most overarching discovery that came as a surprise in my fieldwork was the ideas, thoughts and dreams that I got out of asking my interlocutors to imagine an emancipated Beirut. To simply imagine a walk in Beirut in the body of a woman. The results were rather stunning for me by their simplicity in terms of desire. Most importantly, the simplicity of the imagination of my interlocutors illustrated how faces of capitalism, neoliberalism, sexism, classism, racism and sectarianism are embedded in the everyday. Moreover how the dreams and imagination of the interlocutors is very resistant to the various aspects of capitalism and sectarianism.

The first reaction for most of the people interviewed when I asked them to imagine an emancipated Beirut was always "euf (a sigh of realization) I never thought about this before" which made me aware of how much imagination is missing from our collectives. The results on the other hand elaborated on how not only our imagination is

important, but to elucidate those imaginations and to mobilize on their grounds is extremely important.

Hala for example, a working class woman, that started her activism work around women rights out of a deep sense that there is something wrong with the relationships of power in the everyday towards her as woman imagined Beirut as non-capitalist nonsectarian one.

> I imagine Beirut without sectarian borders. A Beirut where
> you can feel safe walking in the streets without sexual
> harassment and without people questioning what your
> religion is. Without the constant policing of your
> body in the street. Moreover I want to walk in streets
> where the streets are named after people who matter,
> who did something useful for this world, not after
> countries that colonized us, or politicians whom
> oppressed us. Further more I want the Beiruty sea
> to be accessible for everybody at least to look at,
> not like it is now, with the existence of places
> such as Zaitouna Bay, I don't go to Zaitouna
> Bay, the place gets on my nerves (Hala, January 2014).

Hala's imagination of an emancipated Beirut captures a lot of how Beirut is structured in the present. One that is highly capitalist with sectarian borders and that is very unfriendly to its residents, women in specific, strangers as well. The borders that Hala spoke of are a combination of left-overs from the Lebanese civil war and the current neoliberal rise in Beirut. While whenever politics of Beirut is spoken of, there's always the mentioning of the national unity and co-existence of various sects together, it is mostly and apart from few places the emerged in the past five years such as Hamra and Mar Mkhayel El Naher, it is the exact contrary. Achrafieh for example is the place where the Christians reside, Dahiye where the shiaa, Ras El Nabea where the Sunni, the jabal is where the Druze. These places do not have physical borders or gates, but in the collective

imagination of people residing in Beirut there are hypothetical borders that bound these areas to certain sects. And sometimes the residents of these areas make sure to keep these boundaries drawn, subtly but very strictly by making any stranger body feel estranged. In order to elaborate on this point I would like to reflect on a personal experience that I observed during my fieldwork. As I was taking a cab to Achrafieh, I went in while a conversation was going on between the cab driver and another passenger. The driver was a young man, barely in his late thirties and the woman was in her late fifties. It was obvious that the driver was Christian, with the cross hanging of his mirror, and the women as well a "native" resident of Achrafieh. The women went on speaking about how Achrafieh is not for its native residents anymore, how old natives are selling their lands to the ghorbie (strangers). You see ghorbie everywhere she said; you don't feel safe walking in the streets anymore. She mentioned a couple of old native family names that are still there and ended her talk with: Achrafieh is not ours anymore. To the reader this might sound as a very abstract thing to say, but to a person born and raised in Lebanon most of my life, especially born and raised in Achrafieh itself I could understand what the women was hinting at. The stranger is the other, the Muslims, the Syrian, mostly anyone who is not Christian and white European or American.

These are the borders that Hala speak of, and they can apply to any other place in Beirut, this othering is not an abstract one that is spoken of by theory, but one that manifests itself in the everyday. Everyone is always the other in Beirut most of the time, and that's where Hala's imagination expanded to capture this othering, to refuse it and rebel against it. The ability to imagine a Beirut without borders and hypothetical spatial walls is the realization that there is something dysfunctional about the way it is in the

present. But Hala's imagination was not only bound to sectarianism, it was as well an imagination of a less capitalist Beirut. This imagination becomes obvious when she mentions how Zaitouna Bay gets on her nerves. Zaitouna Bay is one of the most recent reflections of the molding Beirut into a capitalist consumptionist economy. It is part of Solidere, a company that was head by former parliament president Rafic Al Hariri that took on his shoulders the rebuilding of Beirut after the civil war, thus buying lands of downtown Beirut causing a gentrification crisis. Moreover rebuilding a very modern downtown that is based on consumption. The Beirut downtown nowadays has inside it the parliament; couple of banks and the rest is a food court and highly expensive shopping centers.

Zaitouna Bay on the other hand is the most recent addition to Solidere, where Solidere did not only settle for downtown Beirut area, but also decided to privatize the sea in the Biel area that is facing downtown from the seaside. The seaside now is a parking for people's boats and another food court where a certain class can afford to visit it, and have a walk by the sea. Even though the place is opened for the public similar to a Corniche where you can take a walk or bike, the feeling of the place is very uninviting to less than upper middle class/upper class public. Moreover it is infested with security guards that can at any point refuse to let a person in according to their own standards.

Another interlocutor that showed resistance towards the neoliberal mode of urbanization of Beirut was Sara. Sara took her time while she imagined Beirut, was on the contrary of most of my interlocutors not surprised by the question and did not seem as if she never thought about it before like the rest stated.

> It will have to be in a space that respect public space.
> And by extension to respect the private space within

public space, and individuals space within the private
space. It will have to be a far less pissing contest
between men, without having them asserting in
every second that this is their area. You are the
women, you are on my land, I (as a man) can
stand and piss in the street and you (as a woman)
cannot. I can (as a man) walk in the streets topless,
and you (as a woman) cannot. (Sara, January 2014).

Here I interfere by saying, well you can piss in the streets hypothetically speaking, but

what is at stake in that?

Of course you can, but you will be chased, attacked,
and also harassed. Women ask for permission when
they are in the public space, it is the territory of
men. Emancipation happens when nobody owns the
public. When it is a collective property. It might not be
only about women as well, if a man is walking in the
street, unless he looks like he is from the area he is
walking in, people should try not to make him feel
uncomfortable by existing in that area; dogs
and women included. Emancipation is not about
women only, it is about everybody coexisting in
the public space. The domestic worker and the
business man. If you are walking with a a person of
color, a darker person in Beirut, you realize you
are walking in a very different place, someone can
simply come and spit in your face. (Sara, January 2014)

Sara here reflects on a deep problem that Lebanon is facing nowadays, the racism against

domestic workers, foreigners and people of color. She resumes:

I imagine an emancipated Beirut where I can walk in the
street at any given time, and sit naked by my window.
These small acts that are derived from the feeling that if
I do so, nothing bad will happen. Moreover, I don't want
to see men taking out weapons at each other. I just
want to walk, I just need to walk, open the door
get out and walk. An emancipated Beirut is a place
where you don't need to make sure your
phone is working for emergencies, or hide a little knife
in order to protect yourself. Where you don't need to
always be aware of faces around you so that if one
face is repeated too much that means that they are

following you. You don't need to think how drunk am I, or
how tipsy am I. Even if you are buying alcohol, you
don't need to diversify where you buy your alcohol
from because I am a woman and I am living alone and
maybe someone will stalk me.

An emancipated Beirut is somewhere where I am not scared of bridges or the cars stops to invite me in. A place where I don't flip when someone talks to me in the streets. Maybe as well, a place with lot of benches, few trees, where you can just grab a book and go read, without having to make sure you have an alibi for being in the public. I remember once I just grabbed a book and went to read in a public place and then it started getting dark and someone had to stop and ask me what I am doing. I got scared, obviously I am not supposed to be a girl sitting alone and just reading, what do you mean reading? It's not your space, why would a girl sit alone, you are just fishy. I am a person who sometimes burst into walks and you have to always walk giving the impression that you are heading somewhere, rushing as if you are going somewhere. And this is something that is very interesting. If you see the men that are sitting in the streets, a guy can just take his hooka and go and sit in the streets, sit around, they don't need to be doing anything, they are welcomed in the public. Now it is pragmatic because of course they will be the first to be accused if something happened in the streets but it's this glorification of focusing on the social bond, women only do it in the private. When someone is not there to judge them, because house work never end. You have to earn it, and you have to be a mother to do a sobhiye (a morning coffee party where women come together, have coffee, talk and socialize). Moreover if you are still unmarried you don't do sobhiyet. I imagine Beirut where the urban environment is a healthy environment. You have rules built for public engagement instead of building individual bonds and

individual spaces, you have to make rule on the spots in the urban. (Sara, December 2013).

While I was interviewing Sara and listening as she drew for me her imagination of an emancipated Beirut, the first thing that came to my mind as she talked was the article of why loiter, the authors argue that the mere pleasure of being in the public space holds the possibility of the public becoming a more friendlier place for women in public spaces in cities. Moreover transforming women relationship with the city to a more inclusive one. The authors as well stress on how rape, violence and sexual harassment have become the major aspects in which mobilization of women rights took place. Where they have become visible in hierarchal manner where other aspects of existing in the public become minor compared to them (Phadke, Ranade & Khan, 2009).

Loitering authors claim is important because of its value by itself within a highly consumerist capitalist society that reduces the public space for women into one that entails them playing the role of a consumer or productive in it. "For loitering, the lack of demonstration of a visible purpose is usually perceived as a marginal, sometimes downright anti-social, even extra-legal, act of being in public city space" (Phadke, Ranade & Khan, 2009 p.1). When Sara narrated the story of carrying her book and simply going to sit in a public place doing nothing but reading, while she does not look productive in capitalist terms, she was assumed by the people in the public as someone either dangerous or in danger. But the danger in public space does not only come from women in Lebanon, neither in India as the authors claim. It comes out of any non-productive mobile body that does not have a purpose of either producing or consuming in the public space. The poor in specific are perceived as dangerous mobile bodies.

Moreover in the context of Lebanon the refugees and the others; especially what I previously referred to as strangers. For example, most recently there was a very wide spread phenomenon from municipalities to limit the mobility of refugee and migrant workers for the sake of safety of the citizens. Huge signs were hung in neighborhoods that prohibited any foreigner (read as Syrian, Sudanese, Egyptian or south East Asian who are refugees, construction worker or daily paid labor workers) from going out to the public after six at night for the safety and security of the local citizens.

Cities here are not assumed to be ones that are constructed and built spatially or ideologically by themselves, or by authority as well. Cities and not only a product of capitalism and neoliberalism, they are as well a product of the human beings that live in them. "The freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves, is, I want to argue, one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights". (Harvey, 2008, p.23). Harvey here hints on people making the city, while the city makes the people as well, it's a cycle of both contributions into creating space. I resort again to the example of someone asking Sara what is she doing while she read her book. The people in cities are not only a target of loitering prohibition; they become as well agents of this prohibition by policing each other, those who subvert from this constant mode of productivity – going somewhere to do something – are constantly policed and estranged. Therefore when state is missing in policing people, people themselves have become similar in their mode of thinking and perception of the public as state. Thus leaving cities in a Harvey sense as ones that are surplus values by themselves; simultaneously a product and producer of surplus value.

The prohibition and constraints of mobility towards foreigners in Lebanon elaborates more and more how cities and the urban under capitalism and the neoliberalisation of the urban are shaping the way the working class and the poor are being pushed out of that city, unless they are there to labor for the rich. Urbanization under capitalism, create hardships for working classes to maintain a good life in it, therefore opening itself up through land prices and expensive apartment for the upper class only, and marginalizing the rest of the population into the suburbs. Prices of land along with signs of policing, limiting of mobility and constant policing by citizens to noncitizens works hand in hand of shaping urban Beirut to a productive city where pleasure includes consumption and excludes loitering and any other activity that is not merely for productive purposes in the public.

Jihan on the other hand, imagined a different Beirut, a one that is less capitalist and less violent on her own body and on the bodies of others.

> Oh, it's been a long time since I dreamt. Not to think
> what I want to wear, I like choosing my clothe, but as
> well I like on some days when I don't feel like putting
> effort into thinking what to wear, not to (not that I
> do it when I don't feel like doing it). What
> I am wearing, who I am walking with, who do
> I speak to in the street, if there's a sidewalk or not,
> if people will run over each other in the cars or not.
> Not to worry about explosions blasting at any
> second, no trash in the streets. Not a lot of advertising,
> and for things to be accessible for everybody,
> even the bodily disabled (Jihan, January 2014).

Jihan, as a lot of other people I interacted with in Beirut showed a high level of anxiety and body awareness, due to the various tactics of advertising and commodifying bodies as cite of making profit. It is common knowledge and a thing that you notice in the streets, that Beirut is famous for having one of the highest rates of plastic surgeries in the

world. This is mostly due to the way advertising portray people as humanly impossible figures of beauty that redefines measures of beauty within a capitalist measures that are projected through advertising. Having unattainable measures of beauty put people in a point of always desiring these measures of beauty and adopting them as their own, mostly opening doors of consuming beauty and skinning products. Therefore, Worrying about what to wear does not come as a natural act, it is more a of a symbolic gesture of how much the fashion industry and advertisement are rooted in the social perception of the acceptable and the unacceptable ways to look. Both create constant awareness and self-surveillance around commodities such as clothes and looks. Anxiety in that sense is not one that is clinical, as it is not my area on any level to diagnose clinical anxiety, but the use of term here is within the mainstream perception of anxiety. Anxiety as a sense of body awareness and feeling threat of most of things around. The Institute of Precarious Consciousness in their latest article argues that capitalism and the way it influences and regulates people went through stages. The current stage, this age we live in is the age of anxiety that tends to tame militancy in specific, under modes of surveillance from state and people alike.

Today's public secret is that everyone is anxious. Anxiety has spread from its previous localized locations (such as sexuality) to the whole of the social field. All forms of intensity, self-expression, emotional connection, immediacy, and enjoyment are now laced with anxiety. It has become the linchpin of subordination" (Institute for Precarious Consciousness, 2014).

Authors elaborate on how anxiety has become a trait in humans living in this moment of history. All forms of connection and self-expression became saturated with

anxiety. Jihan's sense of discomfort with what to wear and who to speak to in the street comes as an indication of how capitalism make one anxious about their bodies, and consequently their human connections, especially in the public. What to wear means choosing clothes that fits with the social perception of what is socially acceptable.

But what I would like to stress on the most is her statement is: "whom I am walking with, and whom I speak to in the street". This statement highlights the immense amount of a police state Beirut has turned into the past couple of years.

The rise of explosions in Beirut since 2005 and the limitless assassinations of politicians, up until today with the explosions blasting sometimes once a week or once a month gave the Lebanese state the perfect reasoning for surveillance. The surveillance can manifest itself in various ways, starting with faces that become too familiar in one area and turn out eventually to be an army intelligence member, or random people from state intelligence who wear civil clothes and at any given point can stop you in the road and interrogate you. The latter can throw anyone at any given moment under the category of a terrorist, or an outlaw. The latter hold the possibility of turning their lives upside down, either through imprisonment or through constant conflict with the state.

This knowledge of and awareness that a lot of activists are conscious of made it impossible for them to feel a sense of safety and belonging to the urban. Socializing, and engaging in political debates in Beirut might be for some people a trigger for anxiety, which limits human interaction in the public to less and lesser. Finally, it is noticeable that this troubling sense of discomfort around the police state is so deep, that someone would imagine emancipation as a Beirut without it.

Another sense of discomfort of the heightening of capitalism in Beirut manifests in another imagination of an emancipated Beirut.

> For starters it wouldn't have these little monoprixs
> opening in every neighborhood, but we would see like
> before those small shops owned by individuals not big
> corporations. Did you see how they are opening in
> every corner? It's crazy. A cute little dekene
> (little shop usually owned by a local individual)
> owned by someone from that street living in that street.
> It will have a lot of local products instead of Nestle
> and all the other imported stuff. And next to it you will
> have a bar that is owned by a person from that street as
> well. The bar will have Lebanese wine and beer from Palestine.
> It will be well lit at night for example. Your parking will not
> be paid, you wouldn't have a parking meter for example.
> It will also have greenery, maybe a bench or something.
> It wouldn't have cars but bicycles only. And as a woman
> I would like it to be a friendly street, not a hostile one
> where you can pass by smile at a person and move
> on with your day without being harassed as well.
> (Layla, January 2014)

As most of my interlocutors, again Layla's answer came as a reflection of this discomfort. Her imagination is troubled by the fast and recurrent multiplication of big corporate supermarkets that are taking over local smaller businesses that are usually a source of living for working class families. The image of the big machine devouring the small individual source of living resonates loudly in such an imagination. But what is most significant about Layla's imagination is how immersed it is with her activism work around Palestine. Layla has been always one of the loudest voices in the Nasawiya collective calling for an inclusive approach in the collective's work within its feminist politics. Layla in her descriptive imagination of emancipation dreamt of a Beirut where you don't find Nestle products. Nestle is on the top list of the products to boycott by the

BDS movement that supports Palestine against the Israeli occupation and calls for boycotting Israel economically and culturally alike.

The activism in support of the Palestinian cause in Lebanon against the Israeli occupation was one of the core causes that Nasawiya took on publicly and bluntly despite its conflictual nature, given the history of the Lebanese civil war and the war of the camps. Especially that a lot of the public opinion is as I elaborated before, very sensitive towards the strangers. Palestinians are as well perceived as strangers, regardless of how long have they been in Lebanon, and whether they were born in Lebanon or not. Sometimes, this opinion sneaked into the collective where a when in support of the BDS movement – Nasawiya called for the boycott of Placebo concert in Lebanon sparked a lot of fight within the collective, leading a lot of people withdrawing out of the collective. Moreover put Nasawiya in the position of the far left "uncivilized" collective that is interfering with cultural issues for political agendas. There were a lot of compromises that the collective had to go through in order to take on the Palestinian cause as one that it supports. For example, in another incident, one the members of the collective once ran into a Lebanese famous blogger and human rights activist in a protest where a conversation took place and she asked him, how come you barely come to protests that are organized by Nasawiya, he answered disgustingly "well you are the radical ones and all, wearing your Koufiyas to every protest"

Within revolutionary struggles, patriarchal, racist, classist and so on codes and segments can all reappear. These microfascisms spare no one. 'Leftist organizations will not be the last to secrete microfascisms,' Deleuze and Guattari warn us. 'It's too easy to be antifascist on the molar level, and not even see the fascist inside you, the fascist you

yourself sustain and nourish and cherish with molecules both personal and collective' (Nail, 1987 p, 262).

Identifying as a leftist, or human rights activist does not mean anything other than a empty label if subjects within movements do not challenge the tendency of fascism that lurks inside everyone of us, due to our social construction as subjects of this system that produce fascism as one of its faces. Especially in Lebanon, the story I narrated signifies the tendency of high fascism even among activists who represent themselves as progressive leftist human rights activist. Most importantly, the latter story captures a lot about power and hierarchies of support in the Lebanese society. Wendy browns argue that politicization introduces power where it was assumed not to exit before (Brown, 2002, p.568). By Nasawiya taking on the Palestinian cause as one of its fronts of mobilization and politics, thus politicizing over and over again the Palestinian cause from a feminist perceptive elaborates on her the power of the social of acceptance or rejection plays a role of how a movement can collect public support or not. Moreover it questions, what are the compromises that need to be done in order to get public support. By far, Nasawiya prevails to take the Palestinian cause and the BDS tactics as one of its non-negotiable causes regardless of its consequences regarding gaining more public support. A tactic of speaking truth to power and articulating what many collectives failed to confront: the Lebanese othering strategies and fascism.

This leads us to another imagination, one that captures strategically and sarcastically the popular way the Lebanese perceive themselves. This perception of course even if not obvious, is always with contradiction and comparison with the other (who can be anyone else). Which leads to the next imagination: "where the Lebanese

don't think they are god gifts to the world" As for Soha and Jinan, their imaginations

stretched outside of Beirut.

> I have a problem with emancipated Beirut because
> it doesn't include emancipated south Lebanon, I would
> imagine it would have to be a secular political governance
> system. That all of the current political families have
> disappeared in the moon or something. An extremely
> dimensioned power of religious clerics and institutions,
> what people want to do with their own religion is to
> be respected but diminish the political and legislative
> powers of religious institutions, to may be part of
> public debate about issues but not the power to legislate.
> A space where I wouldn't get stared at called at, whatever
> no matter what I look or what I am wearing, where I wouldn't
> see ads that say " now recruiting: a woman for work. *A
> nisa matlouba lil 3amal (women recruited for work)*.
> When I walk up the store I am not asked if have money
> or I speak French or whatever. I would consider a
> public space that is very green and friendly and
> older people and people with disabilities and
> walkers and bikers. Maybe some cars.
> I imagine it as a place that have more order and
> where men don't think their god gifts to women
> and the Lebanese don't think they are god gifts
> to the world. Where people are treated equally
> in all aspects of the law, whether citizens or not citizen.
> Where I don't hear or see racist or sexist jokes and
> comments everywhere. (Soha, January 2014)

Soha reflected on a very important point with her imagination that stretched

outside of Beirut to capture a problem in Lebanon: only the political happenings that take

place in Beirut are the ones who manage to get the attention of the wider public. As I was

interviewing her, war in Tripoli still prevailed. The civil war between the Sunni and Shiaa

that spread from Syria to the very fertile social fabric of Lebanon, exploded in Tripoli due

to tensions between the Sunni and the Shiaa that have been building for a long time.

Especially after the seven days of civil war that sparked in Beirut in 2007 between Hezeb

Alla/The Amel movement and the 14th of march that included mostly Sunni from the

future party and a minority of Druze from the Jabal area. There was barely any attention on a political level given to the civil war in Tripoli apart from the few leftist activist that agitated against it in Beirut. The political parties and the public in Beirut turned their heads away from the happening in Tripoli using the argument of "al na'i bel nafs" (isolation) based on the fear that this war will spill out to Beirut and consequently to the whole country. Few local trials to end the Tripoli war were made from separate political sides of Tripoli that resulted in a temporary decrease in the intensity of the events. The Tripoli story again and again reiterates a recurring symptom of disfunctionality in Lebanon, which is borders of interest in human lives and safety are bound by it's location and not the fact that it's a life no matter where it is.

Also, Soha touched on the imagination of an occupation free Lebanon from Israel, especially south of Lebanon who was liberated from the Israeli occupation by the resistance forces of Hezeb Alla in year 2000. Moreover and due to the sectarian intensity in Lebanon Soha dreamt of a non-sectarian government that is not run by clergymen and its consequences as I elaborated in chapter one. She also touched on citizenship and the situation of non citizens whom are mostly either strangers I discussed in the beginning of this chapter, or the migrant domestic workers that still face racism on a social and political level in Lebanon.

I end this chapter with Jinan, she as all the other interlocutors highlighted yet another point about the urban, that it is rooted in patriarchy.

> I guess I wouldn't wake up in Beirut. Beirut is the
> place where I learned what patriarchy means and
> if I have the option to leave it I won't say no.
> We think that rural areas that send sexism to the urban,
> but it's completely the opposite. I guess I wouldn't
> wake up as pissed of as I am, it feel safer in the streets,

I would rather go out late at night rather than
during the morning. (Jihan, January 2014)

Jinan reflected mostly on how Beirut is patriarchal, where she stated that Beirut taught her what patriarchy means. People think that the rural areas is where patriarchy comes from, but given her experience, it is quite the contrary. Beirut's image as the perfect modern democratic state and perceived as one of the most liberal places in the Arab world is highly hindered via this statement. A reflection that is mostly very real. Even though Beirut is perceived as liberal, the situation in it is one where patriarchy still prevails. On the other hand, she as well managed to deconstruct the relationship between the urban and the rural where she the rural in her opinion was less patriarchal then Beirut, against all the mainstream ideas that always perceives the rural areas as backwards.

These imaginations that mostly resonate a deep resistance towards capitalism and neoliberalism elaborate how imagination by itself is a form of rupture of the narrative of the everyday. Yes, most people imagine their lives in the everyday, but what happens when they imagine emancipation, what doors does it open for mainstream scrutiny of the Lebanese system. I wonder up until today if this question have influenced any of my interlocutors, or our conversation about the law. Therefore this chapter is an invitation for us all to pause and question, think and imagine.

Concluding Thoughts:
Without assuming that there was an Event, and the process is over.

To conclude is to put an end to a process, to assume that something is over, and there's a need for a last word. Therefore this is not a conclusion, this is an invitation to imagine and question. To imagine an emancipated Beirut through my interlocutor's eyes, where it is a less hostile city towards women. Where you can walk in the street and see

women hanging out in the streets smoking hookah, talking and debating politics, or any other activity of choice. Imagine a less miserable society where in your neighborhood the guy who you grew up buying gum from still owns his little shop, and you pass by everyday to a familiar smile that brightens your day. Imagine the sea is for everyone, not privatized, not commercialized, just have space for everyone to take a walk next to it without the constant invitation of shop to consume, and without having to be from a certain class to enter to the seafront. Imagine going out of your house without your defenses and anxieties, without the fear and constant self-awareness from surveillance, the one coming from the police or citizens alike. To walk without being scared to say hi to another human being in the urban.

Imagine more trees and less advertisements billboards. More good mornings and no news every single day that a person died from domestic violence, rape, famine, and mysterious accident or from state violence. Imagine a Beirut without prisons, without checkpoints, without the too many familiar faces of intelligence members, or the ones that are not familiar. Imagine Beirut with no sectarian borders. Imagine Beirut where religion is not the tool to produce difference and marginalize on its bases a minority and engage in perpetual othering of strangers – the local from them or the foreigners – in order to build a nation state. Imagine a Beirut where clergymen are just another part of an ongoing political debate, rather than god representatives on earth and representatives of the constant manufacturing of dogma. Imagine a prison-less Beirut, with no checkpoints; no police in every five meters of the street, no explosions every couple of weeks. More bicycles and people with disabilities enjoying the sea front because they have access to tools that help them to get out of their houses.

How would it look like if there were less malls, and more public parks? Less religion more kindness. Less rushing into work, walking fast to avoid sexual harassment or any type of other human intervention in your day, to enjoying a walk with fresh air at night and watching how lights reflects from places on the waters of the city. It is that hard? That hard to imagine an everyday that is as simple as this? Again, these are not questions that need a yes or no answer; there are an invitation to think, whether why can we imagine, or why not. Whether we like this emancipated Beirut, or we want our own different version. All of this might sound like impossible things, far fetched dreams. But think if them, these are not big events of revolutions, these are small events of the everyday that gives a nice texture to one's life. This is not utopia we are speaking of, utopia in itself is problematic because it assumes there's an arrival point, where justice to all human being is achieved. Where emancipation is thought of in this thesis as a process of constant becoming.

Even though this thesis works as a wider critique of the law and UN institutions through the domestic violence law, it has to be acknowledged that yes movements for a long time have used the law as a strategy to maneuver the power relationships with state. To form little ruptures in the discourse that keeps producing more injustices everyday. *Kafa* and *Nasawiya's* effort might have not changed the law to a better one, or emancipated women in Lebanon, but because of them, talking about domestic violence, rape and marital rape are not a taboo anymore. And the discourse in discussing them is molding more and more into a friendlier discourse towards women. That said, here I start by concluding with more questions (favorite activity). So many efforts have been put in mobilizing for the law in the past seven year, ones that as I suggested in this thesis as

give tools for more control and surveillance for states in the name of protection. Yes there were small victories, but those are the most dangerous ones of them all. Small victories are the base of this constant crisis sustainability. If it wasn't for the small victories, the small portion of drugs that gives hope, thus keeps people hoping for more bigger victories this system of oppression that keeps producing both oppression and victories at the same time may fall. Victories, even though they feel great should not be seen as happy moments, rather then scary moment, one that do not push the feeling of the violence of the everyday to an unbearable level to the extent that someone would resist it. Here I use the feeling of violence because I don't mean to say that violence should increase, violence whether with victories or not is increasing everyday as a product of the social and economical neoliberal capitalist system we live under, but the feeling of violence varies in time zones, depending on mobilizations and activism. Once we stop feeling violent more and more as it gets normalized and the power relationships with state get concealed, we are becoming more tolerant to the idea of being violated and unhappy. A very unhappy nation state that is. In order to elaborate on this important point, I resort to a piece of the little prince conversation with the king, when he was on the lonely king's planet, a planet with a king but no subjects to rule.

> I have nothing more to do here," the little prince said to the king.
> "So I shall set out on my way again.
> Do not go," said the king, who was very proud of
> having a subject. "Do not go. I will make you a Minister!
> Minister of what?
> Minster of–– of Justice!
> But there is nobody here to judge!
> Hum! Hum! said the king. "I have good reason to
> believe that somewhere on my planet there is an old rat.
> I hear him at night. You can judge this old rat.
> From time to time you will condemn him to death.
> Thus his life will depend on your justice. But you
> will pardon him on each occasion; for he must be treated thriftily.

He is the only one we have. (Antoine de Saint–Exupery, 1943, p. 29).

The king is king, but that king cannot be a king without subjects. Moreover, justice cannot be just if it doesn't simultaneously reproduce injustice. If there is no one to rule, then there will be no law. If there is no one to protect, then why would there be surveillance? If at this historical moment people did not aspire protection and ask for justice from state, then injustice and the things we need to be protected from might seize to sustain itself, thus seizing to exist.

Binaries. Oppression exists, work in binaries. It reproduces itself via binaries. How? It is in what I referred to above as big loses and small victories. Oppression does not sustain itself on big losses of human rights or imagined liberation. It sustains itself on small victories. These anesthetic anecdotes of liberation are the food outside the cage of the rat wheel.

Finally, if we imagine this system of oppression as one that is linked to neurons in our brains, where it derives its sustainability from people's belief in it, then the moment we pause and question it, it might be the first step towards a process of non ending negotiation with the world in order to be in a non ending process of emancipation. To question what is at stake if we realize that our movements are constantly being absorbed by neoliberalism is a first step towards emancipation. Moreover, this is an invitation to question what is at stake if we dropped legitimizing state by giving it power to control and try alternative ways of mobilization.

This is not the end, this is barely a trial of a minor rupture and an invitation to imagine. If we stopped imagining we die, and the world is already full of too many zombies.

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